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THOUGHTS  
ON  
CHRISTIAN DUTY.



BY J. M. PENDLETON,

PROF. OF THEOLOGY IN UNION UNIVERSITY, MURFREESBORO', TENN.

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SOUTH-WESTERN PUBLISHING HOUSE:  
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## P R E F A C E .

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THE following numbers, entitled, "Thoughts on Christian Duty," were published originally in the *Tennessee Baptist*. They were designed for Christians *generally*, and for young converts *particularly*. The author supposed that something of the kind would be beneficial to those who had just entered on the Christian life, and he undertook the task because no one else seemed inclined to undertake it. Persons recently converted to the faith of the gospel are objects of deep interest to those who love Zion. They are the hope of the churches; for soon the fathers and mothers in Israel will be no more. Their places will be vacated by death, and must be filled by those who are now in the freshness of spiritual youth. How important then that these young soldiers of the cross have proper views of "Christian Duty," that they may be faithful in the commencement of their religious career, and continue faithful till death. Then the crown of life will be theirs. It is hoped that in these Nos. not only young converts, but Christians advanced in the divine life, will find some suggestions which will prove of some value. It is needless to multiply prefatory words. It remains only to be said that a desire having been expressed that the "Thoughts on Christian Duty" be published in Tract form, the author does not feel at liberty to withhold his consent.

J. M. P.

UNION UNIVERSITY, June 3, 1857.

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# Thoughts on Christian Duty.

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NO. I.

## THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

IT is a solemn thing to make a profession of Christianity. It is doubtless an act which attracts the notice of angels; for they love to see accessions made to the number of those who love and serve their Lord. Making a profession of the religion of Jesus Christ formally, draws the line of demarkation between his reputed friends and his reputed enemies. Those assuming his name avow themselves his disciples.

What is implied in making a profession of Christianity? is a question worthy of grave consideration. In answer to this question it may be said:

1. *That it implies faith in Christ.* Christianity is a derivative term—it comes from the proper name Christ—and has much to do with

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Christ. Paul refers to the profession of *faith*. There is an avowal of faith in the Lord Jesus. There is a declaration of the fact so boldly stated by Peter—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." "If thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest" be baptized, said Philip to the Ethiopian. Another scripture informs us that "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." And the Saviour himself says, "He that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved." It is evident from these and many other passages of the word of God that in making a profession of Christianity we express our belief in Jesus as the Messiah, and our exclusive reliance on him for salvation. We say that our hope of salvation has his atoning death for its basis. There must be faith before there is a profession of faith. Common sense teaches this, and the order of the evangelical economy accords with common sense.

2. *A profession of Christianity implies "death to sin and resurrection to newness of life."* Paul's indignant, negative response to the question, "shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" derives its appropriateness from the fact that Christians are dead to sin. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." While baptism has a commemorative reference

to the burial and resurrection of Christ, it also recognizes the fact that as Jesus died *for sin*, the believer has died *to sin*, and has risen to newness of life. This death and resurrection occur in the process of "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." They are emblematically set forth in baptism. The believer in being baptized says, "I am dead to sin and alive to righteousness." This is one of the practical effects of the atonement of Christ. He "bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness." Those who die to sin should be emblematically buried, as those who die naturally are actually buried. Nor should God's people ever forget that in being "buried in baptism" they declare themselves dead to sin, and avow their purpose to live a new life.

3. *Making a profession of Christianity implies a solemn declaration that we are the Lord's.* We consider the amazing truth that we are bought with a price, and under the practical impression which it makes, we honestly and cheerfully say that we are not our own. The great question with us is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge that if one died for all then were all dead, and that he died for all that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again."

The apostle's view of the matter seems to have been that as Jesus Christ died for men, no man has the right to live to himself. The selfishness

which would allow this should have no place in the world in which the Saviour suffered, and bled, and died. And when the selfish principle is expelled from the heart the love of Christ constrains, O how sweetly and powerfully. Under its delightful constraint a profession of the Christian faith is made. There is a cheerful avowal of allegiance to Christ. There is a willing acknowledgment of the obligations growing out of the fact that we "were redeemed not with corruptible things as silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ." Let Christians ever remember that in making a profession of religion they solemnly and cheerfully said: "We are not our own; we are bought with a price: we are the Lord's."

4. *The profession of Christianity implies a determination to yield obedience to the Divine commands through life and for ever.* There is a renunciation of our own wills. God's will becomes our will and our rule of action. There is an honest purpose to serve God in all circumstances and at all times. Those who intelligently make a profession of Christianity do not suppose it optional with them to serve God for a few weeks, or months, or years, and then return to the "weak and beggarly elements of the world." No, the consecration to God is for time and eternity. No reservation is made. The service of the Lord is to be the business of life, and when death comes it will transfer the faithful disciple to a state of sublime service in heaven. There is no time for inaction in this world.



This is the place for labor. The rest that remains to the people of God is in the world to come. And that is not an inactive, sluggish rest, but a rest involving holy activity and unwearied employment in the Divine service.

If these views are correct the Christian profession implies much more than multitudes of persons suppose. How diligently should its import and its responsibilities be studied by all who have assumed the name of Christ! It is no little matter to be a Christian. It is infinitely desirable to hear from the lips of the Lord Jesus, when he comes, the eulogium, "well done, good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

## NO. II.

## HOLDING FAST OUR PROFESSION.

HAVING shown what is implied in the Christian profession, I wish now to show *how* and *why* we should hold fast our profession.

1. *We must hold fast our profession by a frequent consideration of what it implies.*

While we have proper views of the import of our profession we shall be likely to hold it fast. But a thoughtless inattention to its import is ruinous to the interests connected with it. Every backslider is a melancholy illustration of this truth ; for backsliding begins with an inadequate appreciation of the importance and the solemnity of the Christian profession. Who that considers that in making this profession he avowed his faith in Jesus Christ—declared his death to sin—proclaimed himself the Lord's—and expressed the determination to serve the Lord forever—can give up such a profession? All Christians should set apart and sacredly observe, at least weekly periods to consider the solemn facts recognized in their profession. A course of this kind would be highly promotive of their spirituality and an almost infallible preventive of backsliding.

2. *We must hold fast our profession by a diligent use of the means of grace.*

Among these means I mention secret prayer—attendance on public worship—and the perusal of the Scriptures. There are other means which I shall not now specify.

Secret prayer. “When thou prayest,” says the Saviour, “enter into thy closet,” &c. Our approaches to the mercy-seat must be frequent. We must there hold intercourse with the Father of Spirits. Prayer is a precious privilege. Those who forsake their closets cannot *hold fast* their profession. “Pray without ceasing.”

Attendance on public worship. The sanctuary is a delightful place. There the praises of the Most High are celebrated—there his word is preached—there his mercy is implored—there Christian association is enjoyed, &c., &c. The services of God’s house are designed to edify his people—strengthen their religious principles—promote their growth in grace. Those professors for whom the sanctuary has no attractions will probably fail to hold fast their profession. It is perilous to mark out a course for ourselves different from that prescribed by Jesus Christ. His wisdom is perfect.

Perusal of the Scriptures. Those who would hold fast their profession must take the word of God for their guide. They must study its sacred pages. They must devoutly peruse it with a determination to do what it requires. Who that does not hold fast the word of God can hold fast the Christian profession?

3. *We must hold fast our profession by cherishing a sense of constant dependence on Christ.*

"Without me," says the Saviour, "ye can do nothing." Paul says: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." We must hold fast to Christ if we would hold fast to our profession. Barnabas exhorted the disciples at Antioch to cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. Those are most safe who are most sensible of their dependence on Christ. They will hold fast their profession as long as they feel dependent on the Lord Jesus for grace to hold it fast. If they depend on themselves they will let their profession go.

Here an important question arises: *Why* should we hold fast our profession? The following reasons may be given:

1. *To show our sincerity in making it.*

The same considerations which prompted us to make a profession of Christianity, should prompt us to hold fast that profession. If we abandon our profession it may well be suspected that proper motives did not actuate us in making it. The perseverance of *saints* is the doctrine of the Bible. When the professed Christian ceases to hold fast his profession he may well doubt, and ought to doubt, his saintship. If we pursue a course which makes our sincerity in professing Christianity *questionable* we do great harm.

2. *To promote the cause and the glory of God.*

There is nothing more injurious to the cause of God than for its professed friends to abandon it. Their unfaltering adherence to it is one important element of its prosperity. Ten professors of religion, by abandoning their profession can do more harm than a hundred infidels. They virtually say, "we espoused the cause of God, but have found it unworthy of our espousal; we therefore renounce it." When this is done the cause of God is injured and his name is dishonored. A relinquishment of the Christian profession tarnishes the Divine glory and insults the Divine majesty. It says in effect that God is not worthy of service continued till death. Who does not see that this aspect of the subject furnishes a strong reason why we should hold fast our profession.

3. *To benefit the world.*

Christians are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. But if they do not hold fast their profession, the salt loses its savor, and the light becomes darkness. Let those who have espoused the Christian cause abandon it, and they lose their ability to benefit and bless the world. Indeed, they become moral nuisances. It would be better for the world if they were not in it. Let Christians, then, by all their solicitude to benefit the world be entreated to hold fast their profession.

4. *To justify the indulgence of the hope of heaven.*

Consistency requires that those who renounce the Christian profession should also renounce

the hope of heaven. There is no guarantee of salvation to those who do not endure to the end. The crown of life is promised only to those who are faithful unto death.

The hope of glory cannot, therefore, be entertained, according to the gospel, if there is an abandonment of the Christian profession. Surely then, the people of God should be influenced by all the consolations which that hope creates to hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering.

## NO. III.

## READING THE SCRIPTURES.

IN the fabulous records of ancient Greece it is stated that a sentence—*one sentence*—came down from heaven. The words were considered so precious as to deserve a conspicuous inscription in golden letters on a magnificent temple. Millions in all probability read that sentence, and treasured it up in their memories, because they supposed it came down from heaven.

Christians have not a sentence merely, but a volume which has come down from God—from heaven. The divinity of its origin is stamped upon it. It carries with it, wherever circulated, the credentials of its inspiration. It courts the inspection of friends, and challenges the scrutiny of enemies.

The Bible is God's book to man. There is no book like it. The truth which it contains is more precious "than gold, yea than much fine gold, sweeter than honey and the honey-comb."

Paul's testimony, or rather the Holy Spirit's testimony through Paul, is, that "the Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." If these sacred writings have something to do with the salvation

of the soul, they are important indeed. Alas, how few appreciate them properly! There is among many professed Christians a lamentable ignorance of the word of God. They do not study it. They do not possess that deep spirituality of mind which is essential to a profitable perusal of the sacred volume. They read hastily, thoughtlessly, and the impression made upon their minds is altogether superficial.

If I can do so, without being charged with presumption, I wish to give some directions for reading the Scriptures.

1. *Read them without any preconceived opinions as to what they ought to teach.* This it is difficult to do, and it will never be done without a strenuous effort. Many persons read the Bible determined to place a Calvinistic construction on its teachings, while others are predisposed to an Arminian interpretation. Some read it with impressions favorable to the divinity of Christ and the expiatory nature of his sufferings—others with Socinian views and partialities. Some read it established in the doctrine of justification by faith—others, confident that there is no justification before baptism. Some read it with the belief that immersion alone is the baptism of the Scriptures—others are resolved that the claims of pouring and sprinkling shall not be disregarded, &c., &c.

Now, instead of these preconceived opinions there should be an honest willingness for God to say just what he pleases. And as he has spoken in his word, the only question is, What has he



said? This question should be asked with the docility indicated by the remarkable words: "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." If the Scriptures were read in this way, how soon would the religious world be united! At present there is so much prejudice—such a disposition to make the Bible teach what its readers, with their various preconceived notions, wish it teach—that the many religious denominations contend for different doctrines and practices with as much earnestness and bitterness as if they had different Bibles. Alas, that the understanding is so often darkened through the blindness—that is to say the depravity of the heart.

2. *Read in connection those portions of Scripture which treat of the same subject.* This is highly important. It includes something more than a comparison of parallel passages—an exercise both interesting and profitable. Passages which cannot be called parallel often contribute to the illustration of one another. Take, for example, those Scriptures which teach the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ. Those which teach the impossibility of justification by the "works of the law" are not exactly parallel, but illustrative and confirmatory. Certain portions of the Epistle to the Hebrews ought to be read, by all means, in connection with the book of Leviticus. Whatever any one of the sacred writers has said on any subject should be diligently compared with whatever others have said on the subject. It will be surprising to those who have never made the experi-

ment how much knowledge of the Holy Scriptures may be acquired in this way.

3. *The Bible should be read with a spirit of self-application.* In its perusal the impenitent sinner ought to say : " These commands to repent and believe the gospel are addressed to me *personally*—to me as certainly as if the sun shone upon no other sinner. Their binding obligation on me is not abated in the least by the fact that they have reference to millions of other impenitent souls." The penitent believer in examining the sacred pages should say, " This requirement, 'be baptized,' is as evidently intended for me as if I were called *by name*, and directed to go into the baptismal waters. I will, therefore, obey it with the promptest alacrity."

The baptized disciple, in reading the inspired volume, should express himself thus : " It is now incumbent on me to do all things whatsoever Jesus my Lord has commanded. I will do what he tells me to do though opposed by the influences of earth and the powers of hell."

Let the readers of the Bible remember that in it God speaks to them. Then will they apply to themselves its holy teachings.

4. *The reading of the Scriptures should be a devotional exercise.* This is very difficult, perhaps at times impossible to translators, revisors, critics, commentators, &c. With them the intellect is so intently occupied as to leave the heart comparatively unmoved. Those who have read the Bible critically in the original languages know what I mean. I do not depreciate their

criticisms, but they ought to have stated times for reading the Scriptures as a devotional exercise. And this is eminently true of the multitudes who can read the word of God only as they have it translated. Their reading must of course employ the intellect, but it ought to exercise the heart rather. The intellect, I had almost said, should be discarded except as the means of reaching the heart. There should be an excitement of the pious feelings and affections of the soul. The Bible speaks to the heart, and a devout perusal of its pages is necessary to the maintenance of Christian spirituality. And if the exercise of reading is interspersed with ejaculatory prayer, so much the better. Indeed, it would be well for the word of God as read to be paraphrased by prayer.

5. *The reading of the Scriptures should be accompanied by meditation.* If reading may be compared to *eating*, meditation is analogous to *digestion*. In a sound physical constitution, digestion always follows eating, and in a sound spiritual constitution, meditation on divine truth accompanies the reading of that truth. Said David: "O how I love the law! It is my meditation all the day."

Numerous and diversified are the topics of meditation furnished by the Bible. They are infinitely important, attractive, sublime, glorious, awful. The loftiest intellect may find in them enough, and more than enough, to employ all its powers; while the devoutest heart will be sup-

plied with spiritual aliment to nourish and sustain the most exalted devotion.

Christians! having read the word of God, meditate on it—study it. At first you may find it difficult, soon it will become an easy and a delightful exercise. If you will be persuaded to read the Bible, as I have now advised, this article will not have been written in vain.

## NO. IV.

WHAT ARE THE REQUISITES OF AVAILING PRAYER ?

1. I answer, *a willingness to relinquish every sin*. David said long since, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." In prayer we call upon a holy God who looks on sin with infinite abhorrence. How can such a God be approached acceptably by those who "regard iniquity?" The "prayer of the wicked" is of necessity "an abomination to the Lord." To offer availing prayer we must view sin, in some degree, as God does. As he hates it, we must hate it also. And our hatred of sin must induce a determination to abandon it. All the paths of iniquity must be forsaken. There must be a relinquishment of *external* sins, and there must be no toleration of *internal* iniquities. There must be an uncompromising war, a war of extermination, waged against sin in all its forms.

2. A second requisite of availing prayer is *sincerity*. We can never successfully draw near to the throne of grace, unless our petitions proceed from sincere hearts. Sincerity is closely allied to a willingness to relinquish every sin. Where this willingness does not exist, there cannot be evangelical sincerity. How can we sincerely ask God to forgive sins which we are reluctant

to forsake? While man looks at the outward appearance, God looks at the heart. Petitions may be presented at the mercy-seat in language the most eloquent—they may be specimens of the richest rhetoric; but what will they avail in the absence of sincerity? Absolutely nothing. To all who offer such petitions, it may be said, “Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss.” They would be obnoxious to the charge which so deeply implicated the Israelites of Isaiah’s day, and the Pharisees during the Saviour’s ministry: “This people draw near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.”

3. A third requisite of availing prayer is *a disposition to forgive injuries*. We live in an apostate world—we belong to an imperfect race. This being the fact, it is not marvellous that we sometimes offend others, and that others sometimes trespass against us. When we pray, if we would have God to hear us, we must forgive those who have offended us. We must indulge no malevolent feelings toward any fellow-creature. We may say this is very difficult. So it is. But we must remember that God has forgiven us infinitely more than we are required to forgive. An unforgiving temper is a curse to its possessor. The Saviour says: “If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.” This is strong language, but it is true. We are taught to pray, “Forgive us our trespasses *as we forgive those who trespass against us.*” When we

offer this petition, and do not exercise a forgiving spirit, we virtually imprecate the vengeance of Heaven on our own heads. We ask God to deal with us as we deal with others. We do not forgive others, and therefore, in effect, we ask God not to forgive us. How often does an unforgiving disposition prevent a successful approach to the throne of grace! The unforgiving injure themselves more than they do those they are unwilling to forgive. They make it morally impossible for God to hear and answer their prayers.

4. *Purity of motive* is a fourth requisite of availing prayer. By this I mean that the blessings for which we pray should be sought for *the proper reason*. And the proper, the comprehensive reason is, that God may be glorified. When Christians pray that they may grow in grace, they should desire progress in the Divine life far more that God may be glorified than on account of any considerations personal to themselves. Parents should desire the salvation of their children, not merely that the solicitude growing out of parental love may be gratified, but chiefly that their salvation may promote the Divine glory. How many parental prayers are never heard, because they are so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of selfishness. Many a minister prays to be useful, but does not, as he should do, look upon his usefulness as the means of glorifying God. He is too anxious, it may be, for it to be known through the newspapers that he is living to some purpose. A church may pray for a revival, and desire it principally

as the best method of gaining the vantage-ground among the conflicting religious denominations. There may be *sectarian* earnestness, and even paroxysms of *sectarian* agony in prayer, but the glory of God is comparatively uncared for, and Heaven does not give ear.

5. A fifth requisite of availing prayer is *confidence in the divine promises*. The language of Christ is: "Whatsoever things ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them." The Scriptures attach great importance to faith. When the "two blind men" went to Christ and entreated him that their "eyes might be opened," he did not *at once* exert his power in restoring their sight, but said, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" They said, "Yes, Lord." He would not open their eyes until they expressed their confidence in his ability to give them sight. Then he said, "According to your faith so be it unto you." "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Nor is it strange that confidence in the Divine promises is essential to availing prayer. Men are never more highly offended than when their veracity is called in question. "God is not man that he should lie." "His truth endureth to all generations." How infinitely insulting, then, must it be to the God of the universe for his veracity to be questioned! And it is questioned by all who do not repose confidence in his promises. It would be most unreasonable to expect God, in fulfilment of his promises, to answer the prayers of those who doubt the truth of those



promises. To approach the throne of grace acceptably, we must draw near in "full assurance of faith." How many prayers does the spirit of unbelief pollute and ruin.

6. A sixth requisite of availing prayer is that *our petitions be presented in the name of Christ*. The Redeemer says of himself: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Sinless beings can approach God without a Mediator. I suppose our first parents in Eden, in drawing near to God, were not dependent on any mediatorial arrangement. But as soon as they sinned, the way of access to the Divine throne was obstructed, and the obstructions were susceptible of removal only by the mediation of Christ. In this way they were removed, and sinners can approach God and live. By Jesus Christ both Jews and Gentiles have "access by one spirit unto the Father." The Father is accessible only through the Son. The genius of the gospel economy tolerates the presentation of no petition to God except in the name of Christ. The Saviour said to his disciples, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father *in my name*, he will give it you." How delightful the thought that Jesus is our Advocate in the court of heaven. He ever lives to make intercession for us. The heart that throbbed and bled on the cross still feels for us, still loves us. Let all our petitions be presented in his name, in humble and exclusive reliance on his mediation, and God will graciously hear and answer them.

7. The last requisite of availing prayer which I shall mention is *importunity*. The Saviour forcibly inculcates the propriety of importunate prayer in Luke xviii. 3, 5, to which turn and read.

According to this representation, importunity accomplishes what considerations of friendship cannot effect. "And," subjoins the Saviour, "I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." I imagine that God sometimes delays the bestowal of the blessings sought by his people, that he may put to the test their sincerity and their faith. When, however, their requests are not immediately granted, they should pray more earnestly. They should knock louder and louder at the door of mercy. *Spiritual blessings alone* are to be sought with importunity. Temporal mercies are not to be sought thus. Affliction may come upon us, and we may pray for health, but it would be improper to pray with importunity; for it may be better for us to be afflicted. With regard to spiritual favors we cannot be too importunate. They are of superlative value, and their infinite worth justifies importunity. God in bestowing spiritual blessings promotes our best interests and glorifies his own name. Every Christian may, therefore, say with Jacob: "I will not let thee go except thou bless me."

## NO. V.

## FAMILY WORSHIP.

THE family constitution is of Divine origin; for it is God "who setteth the solitary in families." There is admirable wisdom in the arrangement, and if the purposes of the domestic organization are carried into effect the influence on church and state will be most favorable. The family circle is the first place to make religious impressions, and it may be said that, with very few exceptions, the members of an untrained or badly-trained family make worthless citizens. But what is it to train a family properly? Is it merely to care for the physical welfare and the mental improvement of the members of that family? It surely implies something more. Moral and religious interests must be prominently regarded. They must be considered of paramount importance. Parents are very guilty before God if they place any of the interests of their children on an equality with their religious interests. The principle of parental love exists for valuable purposes, and its legitimate operation leads fathers and mothers to seek the spiritual welfare of their offspring.

Here the question arises: Can the heads of families perform their duties to children and domestics without maintaining family worship? To this question I give a negative answer.

1. Because where family worship is not observed *there is no family recognition of obligation to God or dependence on him.*

There may be individual acknowledgment of obligation, &c., but that is all. Prayerless heads of families virtually say that they are under no family obligations to God—that they are not indebted to him for family blessings—that they are not dependent on him for domestic enjoyments, &c., &c. They would not say so in words, but in effect they say so. What impression is, by a course of this kind, made on the minds of children and servants? Evidently an impression which, so far as it is influential, is promotive of practical atheism. It leads those children and servants to act as if there were no God. I know that in many instances there are counteracting influences which correct that impression, but no thanks are due those prayerless ones for these counteracting influences. They are originated by others, not by them.

Can there be in any family a suitable recognition of obligation to God without family worship? And without this recognition can the heads of families meet their responsibilities and perform their duties to children and domestics? No one will answer these questions affirmatively.

2. Where family worship is not maintained

*there is not a suitable appreciation of, nor a proper gratitude for, domestic blessings.*

I know that many will refer at once to individual appreciation of Divine favors, and individual gratitude for them. This is all right, and very appropriately calls forth the thanksgiving of secret prayer. Individual blessings call for individual praise. But there are family blessings—household favors, which demand domestic thanksgiving and praise. How manifestly proper it is for the members of a family receiving, as they do, the blessings of heaven conjointly, to offer their conjoint praises to the God of heaven! But are these domestic thanksgivings possible without family worship? How can they be? And can children be expected to cherish a grateful remembrance of Divine favors when they hear from their parents around the domestic hearth no expressions of gratitude to God? How can children be trained up in the way in which they should go, unless the propriety of thanksgiving to God for his mercies is inculcated? And what inculcations are so impressive, so forcible, as those of family worship? I see not how the duties of heads of families to their children and servants can be adequately performed without family worship.

3. In the neglect of family worship *there cannot be a proper acknowledgement of the necessity of salvation, and the importance of seeking it.*

In surrounding the family altar the fact is impressively set forth that the religion of Jesus

Christ is the one thing needful. It is said in language too plain to be misunderstood, "we who here bow down before God are sinners and need his mercy." The devout father confesses his own sins and the sins of his family, while united supplications are offered for pardon. There is a daily confession of sin, and there are daily petitions for its forgiveness. Nothing is better adapted to impress the members of a family with the importance of salvation than a properly conducted system of family worship. How professedly religious parents can satisfy themselves that, though they neglect the worship of God in their families, they are doing their duty, so far as the salvation of their children and servants is concerned, is very difficult of explanation. What opinion must children form of religion when they never hear their parents, who profess to be religious, call on God in prayer? Can they deem it a matter of much importance? And does not a neglect of family worship often counteract the teachings of the pulpit? Alas! family religion is woefully at fault in this age. There are thousands of prayerless families among professed Christians. They ought to tremble when they read Jeremiah x. 25: "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, *and upon the families that call not on thy name.*" Ah, who can tell how prayerless families will escape when God pours forth his fury? It is the part of wisdom for every father to say with Joshua, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

The best method of conducting family worship is entitled to earnest consideration. On this point the following suggestions are made :

1. *That hour should be selected for this service at which the members of the family can most conveniently come together.*

I do not mean by this that considerations of convenience settle the question of duty. Far from it. My meaning will be indicated by what Paul says of "attending upon the Lord without distraction." There are times in every family when domestic cares can be more effectually dismissed from the mind than at other times. When there can be the most perfect freedom from these cares is the period for family prayer. And if it is not possible to accommodate all the members of a family let as many be accommodated as practicable. Common sense will suggest, of course, that the morning hour of family worship should not be so early as to preclude, on the part of some, preparation for it ; nor should the evening hour be so late as to affect the interest and the vitality of the service.

2. *The exercises of family worship should be short.*

This is important for the sake of younger children ; nor is it needless on account of those who are older. Indeed it sometimes happens that the wearisome services cause the mother to think, while on her knees, that it will be necessary to prepare a second breakfast. When this is the case there can be but little of the spirit of devotion in her heart. Why should the conduc-

tor of family worship deem it necessary to look five minutes for a chapter containing sixty verses, and having read it to look five minutes more for a hymn of eight or ten stanzas, and then offer a prayer as long as Solomon's at the dedication of the temple? I do not say the angel Gabriel would become tired of such services, but I insist that the most pious man on earth might religiously desire their abbreviation. The reading of a few verses—the singing of three or four stanzas—the offering of a short prayer, are, in ordinary circumstances, greatly preferable to more protracted exercises. It is a sad thing when family worship, so far from being invested with attractions, is considered a task and a burden. The tones of the bell calling the family together for prayer should be the sweetest heard during the day.

3. *All the members of a family should, if possible, be interested in family worship.*

In some cases this will be very difficult. Perhaps all effort to accomplish it will be vain. Still those who have the management of family worship should try and enlist all who are present at its observance. I have thought it would be well for all who can read to have their Bibles, and read in rotation. This plan will undoubtedly secure the attention of many persons better than the ordinary one according to which one individual does all the reading. Sometimes explanations of the portions of Scripture read will be necessary. Let the father not explain if any child is competent. The very fact that children



may be called on any moment to give explanations will make them read more attentively.

Young children probably take more interest in singing than in any other part of family worship. It is a good thing to sing praises to the Lord. It is well for all who can read to have hymn-books, and then when the number of the hymn is announced, they can turn to it, and sing it without any interruption from giving out the lines or a failure to remember the words.

Prayer in family worship should be appropriate. It should have reference to the condition of the family. Family prosperity should be gratefully recognized, and the sanctification of family adversity and affliction should be anxiously sought. Absent members of the family should be commended to the protection and mercy of God.

4. *No trivial matter should be allowed to prevent a regular observance of family worship.*

If trifles are permitted to lead to its neglect *once*, they will induce its omission *more than once*. If difficulties are yielded to, there will always be difficulties. If excuses are tolerated they will multiply. If objections are treated with too much respect, they will soon be considered valid. Here the thought presents itself: Perhaps I have now indicated the process by which many a family altar has been demolished. O ye backslidden heads of families! you who once bowed around the hearthstone, do you not now neglect family worship altogether? And has not this state of things been brought about because you suffered trivial matters, and difficulties, and excuses, and

objections to keep you from the family altar? Return to the forsaken altar—rebuild it—and let the morning light and the evening shades witness the regularity of your devotions.

The advantages of family worship constitute a theme on which a great deal might be said. I have, however, already transcended the limits I had prescribed to this subject. O that all who are called by the name of Christ were more diligent in the cultivation of family religion! A much brighter day would then dawn on the churches of the saints.

## NO. VI.

## PUBLIC WORSHIP.

It is the duty of Christians to worship God, not only in secret and in the family, but in the public assembly. They are not to forsake the assembling of themselves together as the manner of some was in apostolic times, and as the manner of many is in these degenerate days. It is painfully surprising to know how many professed Christians fail to attend the services of the sanctuary with any regularity. Perhaps they fill their seats if some preacher of national celebrity is to preach—that is to say, if that preacher is not the pastor. In other words, they attend preaching only to have their curiosity gratified. They do not aim to obey God, nor are they anxious for spiritual benefit. Others go to the house of the Lord if it is perfectly convenient. If they feel perfectly well—if the day is not too warm nor too cold—if there is no appearance of rain or storm—they go to the sanctuary. They serve God as it may suit their convenience. They do not believe in doing any thing which subjects them to the least inconvenience. Theirs is a strange religion. If the days of persecu-

tion should return, I am afraid they would deny the Lord Jesus because it would not be convenient to pour forth their blood, or be wrapped in a flame-shroud in honor of his name. This *convenient* religion will be very *inconvenient* in a dying hour. How it is that Christians are disinclined to engage in the exercises of public worship I do not understand. It is a mystery which defies all comprehension; for the disinclination involves disloyalty to the object of their worship. How can they love God if they feel no interest in his public worship? or are unwilling to be recognized as his public worshippers? With the Bible before me I am not authorized to consider them real Christians. I fear theirs is a nominal religion. Those for whom the earthly sanctuary has no attractions are unfitted for the services of the heavenly temple.

To the people of God his house has ever been a delightful place. David says, "I have loved the habitation of thy house and the place where thine honor dwelleth." "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord." "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." This is the language of the pious heart. To the devout Christian attendance on the services of

the sanctuary can never be a matter of indifference. The house of God cannot be divested of sweet and powerful attractions.

How to make attendance on public worship profitable is a subject well worthy of consideration. I offer the following suggestions :

1. *Preparation for the sanctuary should be made by the cultivation of a devotional spirit at home.*

The advantages accruing from public worship depend much more on the state of the heart than many suppose. The heart must be right with God. If not, it may be said in truth, "This people draw near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." When the spirit of prayer is enjoyed at home—when the Bible is devoutly read—when its truths are made the theme of earnest meditation—then the services of the sanctuary will be profitable. The children of God should never go to his house without praying fervently that they may enjoy spiritual interviews with him, and so wait upon him as to renew their strength. O, how much unprofitable resort there is to the place of worship, because no preparation is made for it! The failure to receive benefit results much more frequently from this want of personal preparation than from any weakness or imperfection in the exhibitions of the pulpit. Seldom is a sermon preached so objectionable in manner, and so defective in matter, as to preclude spiritual advantage, if indeed the hearers are in a devout frame of mind.

2. *The word preached should be heard with solemn attention as the word of God.*

"Take heed," said Jesus Christ, "how ye hear." This surely intimates the possibility of hearing the word of God in an improper manner. And it is heard improperly unless it is listened to with solemn attention as the word of God. Paul says to the Thessalonians, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." The hearer who would be profited by preaching must feel that, so far as God's ministers declare his truth, God himself speaks. And when the Lord of glory utters his voice let mortals listen with reverent attention.

3. *The subjects discussed in the sanctuary should be themes of meditation and conversation in the family.*

Do not think your duty is performed when the sermon is over. The minister has only furnished you with spiritual food which must now be digested to do you good. Perhaps you are in a state of spiritual dyspepsia. If so, avail yourself of the "milk" rather than the "meat" of the discourse. After a while you will be able to digest the "meat." Meditate on what you hear. Converse about it in the family circle. Engrave the truth deeply on your own mind and on the minds of others. Would it not be well for a portion of the Lord's day to be

spent in these family conversations on what is heard from the pulpit?

4. *Earnest prayer should be offered that the influence resulting from public worship may be beneficial.*

Alas, what multitudes mingle in the congregations of the saints and derive no benefit from the services of the sanctuary. Their hearts even become harder under the means adapted to soften them. There are few things more to be deprecated than an unprofitable attendance on the exercises of the Lord's house. It is awful, indeed, when the gospel proves "a savor of death unto death."

But how may public worship do us good, not only while we are engaged in it, but when it is over? Evidently by the blessing of God. Nor can we be profited without his blessing. The most charming music, the best arranged prayers, the most eloquent sermons will be of no avail unless the Lord shall be pleased to bless. And how may his blessing be secured? In answer to prayer. The God we worship has ever been the hearer of prayer. "His eyes are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cries." How full of encouragement are these words! How clearly do they indicate that prayer is efficacious! Those who pray before going to the house of God, and pray while there, and pray when they return home, will be benefited by the services of the sanctuary. The influence resulting from public worship will be a hallowed influence, pervading every secular avocation and

spiritualizing the affections of the heart amid the operations of physical or mental labor. This is what is needed—a religion displaying its power, not only in the Lord's house on his holy day, but diffusing its salutary energy through the business transactions of the week. Under the influence of such a religion, the devout worshiper on the Lord's day, will, through the week, be fervent in spirit while diligent in business, and the man of business will be glad when the time comes to go into the house of the Lord.



## NO. VII.

## PRAYER-MEETINGS.

THERE are many professors of religion who fill their places in the sanctuary on the Lord's day, and listen with attention to the preaching of the word, but they are seldom seen in a prayer-meeting. Various reasons might be given for their absence, none of which, perhaps, would bear a rigid scrutiny. The impression seems to prevail, that meetings for prayer are less important than those for preaching. The correctness of this impression may well be questioned. It is difficult to conceive how any meetings can be more important than those in which the supplications of a Church are offered to God. The prayer-meeting has been sometimes referred to as the moral thermometer of a Church, indicating its spiritual state. The figure is appropriate. Well attended prayer-meetings evince deep spirituality; but when the attendance is meagre piety is in a declining state. There may be a numerous membership—respectable, wealthy, intelligent—but there is little of the power of godliness when the hour of prayer is not hailed as

a welcome hour. The Christian who is growing in grace loves to pray in secret, and delights to call upon God in the social meeting.

Prayer-meetings were held in apostolic times. The Pentecostal effusion of the Holy Spirit was preceded by a protracted prayer-meeting. The apostles "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." The example here left us should be influential. The apostles prayed. They did not consider it a condescension to be present in a prayer-meeting. They were glad to be there. The female members of the Church were there. The desires of their hearts were poured forth in supplication. They looked for the promised blessing. Jesus had given assurance of a more copious effusion of the Spirit than had ever been enjoyed. The disciples did not say, "The promise of our recently ascended Lord is reliable—it will certainly be fulfilled—and therefore we will supinely wait for its accomplishment." No, their confidence in the promise, so far from abating their earnestness and importunity, increased both. They prayed with greater fervor, because they expected that to be done which the Saviour had said should be done.

When Peter was in prison "prayer was made without ceasing of the Church to God for him." The Church knew that God was able to bring his servant out of prison. I do not know that any of the Church expected an angel to be sent from heaven to break Peter's chains and open

the prison doors ; perhaps they had not thought particularly of the manner in which their prayers would be answered. God in granting the requests of his people, is often pleased to overwhelm them with delightful surprise. When Peter was released from prison he went "to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying." That was a prayer-meeting very well attended. Many were there, and they were there for a specific object—prayer. They were too much like modern Christians in one thing—the weakness of their faith. They thought the "damsel Rhoda mad" when she affirmed that Peter was at the door. They did not expect so early an answer to their prayers, or at any rate they did not expect Peter's personal presence in their midst would be the proof God would give that their supplications had been heard. Our Heavenly Father reserves to himself the right to answer prayer when and how he pleases. Perhaps it would be well for me to say how many prayer-meetings might be rendered more interesting and profitable.

1. *There should be a prompt and general attendance of the members of the Church.*

All should be present at the appointed hour. Those who are tardy disturb the devotions of those who are in time. This they have no right to do. Who has not, when kneeling before God, been annoyed by the footsteps of those who are too late in their attendance. Such persons for religion's sake, and for propriety's sake,

should wait at the door till the prayer is ended. The attendance of Church members at prayer-meeting should not only be prompt but general. All should be there unless providentially kept away. Why not? All have wants which should be expressed in prayer. All have sins which ought to be confessed. All are the recipients of favors which should be gratefully acknowledged. None are too rich to attend prayer-meetings, and none are too poor. The rich need to pray that their wealth may not monopolize their thoughts, and the poor that they may not repine at their poverty. None are too wise to pray, and none are too ignorant. None have too much of the grace of God in their hearts to pray, and those who have very little are the very persons that ought to pray for more. I see not how any class of Church members can be excused from a regular attendance at prayer-meetings. And suppose there should be a regular attendance of all classes in all the churches of the saints. It would be spoken of and written about as the most remarkable moral phenomenon of modern times. Many would conclude that the millennium was about to bless and illuminate the world with the splendor of its glory. Alas, as it is, there is scarcely a church of any size, one half of whose members are ever seen together at a prayer-meeting. A majority of professed Christians practically object to meetings for prayer. They say by staying away that such meetings ought not to be attended.

2. *Appropriate prayers add greatly to the interest and profit of prayer-meetings.*

Appropriateness is important in every thing. A brother, of course, should not pray in a time of spiritual declension as he would in a time of revival. The prayers recorded in the Bible were adapted to the circumstances that called them forth. It would have been highly incongruous if Solomon, at the dedication of the Temple, had offered such a prayer as David did when his heart was oppressed with the fact that Jerusalem was desolate. There is a time for every thing. There is a time to pray for spiritual wisdom, but that time was not when Peter was sinking beneath the waves of the sea. Then was the time to pray as he did pray, "Lord, save, or I perish." The apostles prayed appropriately when they said, "Thy kingdom come," while the penitent thief and the martyr Stephen prayed with equal appropriateness when the former said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," and the latter, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

No one should pray at a missionary concert meeting as he would do at an ordinary prayer-meeting. There is a specific object to be prayed for, and other objects must be held in abeyance. It may be said that it is difficult to offer at all times appropriate prayers. This is true. The best way to acquire the habit of praying appropriately, is to have a devout heart, and then reflect before we pray what we ought to ask God for at that particular time. I do not advise that

prayers be written and committed to memory. Far from it. But suitable topics to be dwelt upon in prayer should command earnest and devout consideration. Prayers to be appropriate, must generally be short. There are very few men who can make a long appropriate prayer. There are times, however, when an unusual state of feeling makes this practicable. But ordinarily the longer prayers are the less appropriate.

3. *Suitable portions of Scripture should be read and suitable hymns sung.*

Many who lead prayer-meetings seem to give themselves no trouble in selecting such parts of the Bible as are most appropriate. This in some instances, is owing to an imperfect acquaintance with the inspired volume—in others it is the result of thoughtlessness and carelessness. Any man can, if he will try, find much in the Scriptures that has a direct bearing on the subject of prayer. Occasional comments on the passages read at a prayer-meeting will add to its interest. The hymns sung should be suited to the occasion. The same order of hymns would not do for ordinary prayer-meetings, missionary concerts, and revival convocations. There should be adaptation. And the adaptation should extend to the tune as well as the sentiment. Some tunes sung to some words produce a ludicrous effect; destroy all devotional feeling, and are a burlesque on music. Let all take heed to Paul's words, "Let every thing be done decently," that is in a becoming manner.

Christian reader, will you not in future attend the prayer-meetings of your church? Never, I entreat you, excuse yourself from going to the assembly of the saints by saying, "It is only a prayer-meeting."

## NO. VIII.

## CONGREGATIONAL SINGING.

THERE is music in heaven. The inhabitant of that pure world all sing. Availing themselves of the best forms of musical expression they celebrate the praises of God. How sweet their songs! How melodious their strains, even though loud as "the sound of many waters and mighty thunderings!" There is no discordant note, but perfect harmony. There is a comminglement of angelic, seraphic, and cherubic voices.

But should the praises of God be confined to the celestial world? By no means. Jehovah is worthy of praise "in all places of his dominion." The earth should be vocal with songs of adoration and thanksgiving; for here God makes himself known, and bestows blessings with a liberal hand.

Singing is an appropriate expression of the joy of the heart. Hence the ancient Israelites having passed safely through the Red Sea, sung a song of gladness and triumph. And how often did David sing psalms to the God of his salvation! "Awake up my glory," says he, "awake psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early." He refers to his tongue as his "glory." The



tongue is the glory of man ; for with it he articulates the words he employs in praising God. This, no irrational creature can do. Dr. Watts' paraphrase is full of beauty :

“ My tongue, the glory of my frame,  
Shall ne'er be silent at thy name.”

Man's articulating tongue not only gives him a superiority to other animals, but occupies a very important place among the members of the body. It may be used in many ways, but it ought certainly to be employed in the utterance of musical sounds. Paul and Silas when immured in the prison of Philippi, “prayed and sung praises to God.” This they did at the hour of midnight. “Is any merry?” says the Apostle James: “Let him sing psalms.” And Paul in writing to the Colossians uses the language: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly ; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” This shows that the sentiment of a song is a matter of much importance. How can we “teach and admonish” in singing, if the words we sing are nonsensical? And there must be “grace in the heart.” The musical sounds of the tongue must appropriately express the devotion of the heart.

I imagine that most of our churches are culpably negligent of the duty of congregational singing. This is a part of public worship in which many brethren and sisters do not join. I

hope they pray. But is it not as evidently their duty to sing as to pray? Ought they to be so selfish as to seek blessings in prayer and render no thanksgiving in songs for blessings received? It is as much the duty of a Christian to sing, if he can sing, as it is to pray. They are both important parts of religious worship.

Congregational singing has gone in many places very much into disuse. The music of choirs has been substituted for it. These choirs are very tenacious of their rights, and suppose one of their rights to be a monopoly of music. They think it is the business of the minister to preach and that it is their business to sing. They suppose it would be as impertinent for any one to interfere with them in their singing as with the minister in his preaching. I refer to some choirs—not to all. Every church should reserve to itself the right to control its music. Irresponsible choirs will always be annoyances, if not nuisances. There is no objection to choirs if they know their place, and will keep in it. It is their business to *lead*, not to *monopolize* the singing. The congregation should sing also. For why should God be praised by proxy? And here I may say that both choirs and congregations are often reprehensible. Choirs are so anxious to enjoy the self-satisfaction, resulting from a perfect musical performance, that they are tempted to select tunes which the congregation cannot sing, so as to avoid the occasional discord produced by unskilled voices. This is wrong, and sooner or later it frets the congrega-

tion. On the other hand the members of the congregation are frequently unreasonable. They make no effort to learn to sing. They object to all new tunes and pronounce encomiums on all that are old. I will not say they wish those tunes sung, which were sung by Noah, when he first came out of the ark, but they have a preference for tunes sung before Kentucky and Tennessee, were admitted into the Federal Union. Why may there not be improvement in music? The principles of musical science, have been remarkably developed in recent times; and why should not the churches of the saints, practically avail themselves of the fact? It is their duty to do so. It is a singular circumstance, that many persons who object most strenuously to new tunes, do not sing those that are old. They do not sing at all, though they can sing. They are fault-finders.

There should be this compromise, between choirs and congregations: Let the former, introduce new tunes less frequently—one during a service is enough—and let the latter, instead of complaining, earnestly try to learn every new tune. If this plan is faithfully pursued, there will soon be a sufficient variety of tunes, familiar to congregations as well as to choirs. It would be well too, if in every congregation, a general singing-class could meet once a week, if not oftener. This would be a good preparation, for the musical exercises of the Lord's day.

There are very few things that contribute more to the interest of public worship, than good con-

gregational singing. It is highly instrumental in exciting a devotional spirit, and often renders the prayers, that are offered more fervent, and the sermons preached more effective. It should be remembered that, in assembling for the worship of God, we have in view not only the honor of his name; but the good of our own souls. All the exercises, therefore, which make up the entire service, should have a bearing on the promotion of these objects. Singing, prayer, and preaching should conjointly tend to glorify God, and to benefit the souls of the people. An inappropriate hymn, badly sung, often has a bad effect on all the succeeding services. Every thing should be done decently, and in order. "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable." He is infinitely worthy of adoration, and his name should be magnified in the assemblies of his people. How great is the privilege of celebrating his praise! In so doing we pour forth the devotion of our souls, and anticipate our eternal employment in heaven. When we reach the bright mansions of glory, we shall sing in strains sweeter than angels use. Ours will be the song of redemption through the blood of the cross. Turning our admiring eyes to our great Deliverer, we shall say: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

But let us not wait till we reach heaven, before we sing the praises of God. Let us praise him in our hearts, "making melody to his name." Let us praise him in our families as the Author

of all our blessings. And when we walk to the house of God in company, let us adopt the language of David: "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth to all generations."

If the reading of this chapter shall lead any to attach its proper importance to congregational singing, and make the requisite effort to introduce it into our churches, my object will be accomplished.

## NO. IX.

## GROWTH IN GRACE.

GROWTH in grace is a phrase which denotes the progress the Christian makes in the divine life. That the doctrine of growing in grace is taught in the Scriptures the following passages clearly indicate: "The righteous shall hold on their way, and he that hath clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger." "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." "All the body by joints and bands having nourishment, ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." We read in the apostolic epistles of faith growing exceedingly, of hope abounding, of love increasing, and of patience having its perfect work. Wherever this is the case there is growth in grace. It should be remembered that growth in grace implies a symmetrical development of Christian character. None of the graces of the Spirit are so strengthened as to enfeeble others; but there is proportional improvement in all. The thrifty plant or the vigorous tree grows in all its parts. The well-formed body exhibits

harmonious proportions in all its various members. So in those who grow in grace the elements of Christian character are mingled in beautiful proportions. While they make attainments in knowledge, their faith is strengthened, their love is increased, their zeal becomes more ardent, their hope assumes new vigor, their humility is deepened, their patience is rendered more thorough, and they are richly adorned with all the virtues which constitute the ornament of saints. This is the Divine arrangement, and it is an admirable one. For knowledge, disconnected from faith and love, would be merely speculative—it would “puff up,” but could not edify. Faith without knowledge would degenerate into blind credulity. Love and zeal, sundered from their appropriate connections, would result in enthusiasm and fanaticism. Indeed, it may be said of every Christian grace that if separated from its kindred graces, it would be divested of much of its beauty and loveliness.

I fear the doctrine of growth in grace is very imperfectly exemplified in most modern professors of religion. How many appear more devout at their entrance on the Christian course than ever afterwards! How many run well for a time, and then move with so tardy a step as scarcely to advance at all! And others seem to be stationary, while others still make an apparent retrogradation. Reader, are you growing in grace? Say not this question would suit your neighbor. It is intended for you. Revolve it in your mind every day till you can give it an

affirmative answer. If you are not growing in grace, what scriptural hope can you entertain of heavenly glory? Perhaps you would like to have some of the evidences of growth in grace pointed out. I will name the following :

1. *Increasing hatred of sin.* It is characteristic of all Christians that they hate sin, but in their hatred are many degrees. The hatred of some is much more intense than that of others. Why is sin hateful to Christians? Because the obliquities of their moral vision have been so corrected as to enable them to see things in some degree as they are. Sin is intrinsically and invariably odious, but no man sees it till he is born again. There is no change in sin, but the change is in the subject of regenerating grace. There is a new moral taste, and there is a new moral vision, the taste resulting from the vision. If this be so, the more acute the vision the more acute the taste, and the more acute the taste the deeper the hatred of sin. There are degrees in the acuteness of moral vision. All Christians see sin where impenitent men do not see it—some Christians see sin where other Christians do not—angels see sin where the best Christians do not—and God beholds it where no angelic eye can discern its existence, because in him is exemplified an infinitely perfect moral vision. It follows then that the more acute our moral vision is, the more we are like God, and the more we are like God the more we hate sin. Hence an increasing hatred of sin is one of the best evidences of growth in grace. Our spiritual



state may always be determined by the depth of our abhorrence of sin.

2. *Deadness to the world.* Christians cannot love the world supremely, but they may love it inordinately. There are many illustrations of this inordinate attachment. Now as the spirit of Christianity and the spirit of the world are directly opposite, it is manifest that growth in grace implies an increasing indifference to, and contempt of, the world. Paul was crucified to the world. Crucifixion was a lingering death. The point which the believer's crucifixion to the world has reached, is the point he has reached in his growth in grace. What say you, Christian reader? Are you becoming dead to the world, to its honors, its riches and pleasures?

3. *A deep sense of personal unworthiness.* Job was growing in grace when an exhibition of the glory of the Divine character caused him to say: "Behold I am vile: I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Isaiah was advancing in the Divine life when a contrast of his imperfect character with the perfect character of God led him to exclaim: "Woe is me! for I am undone! I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Paul was rapidly ascending the summit of Christian excellence when, with inimitable modesty, he said: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given." Growth in grace promotes humility, and humility arises from a sense of personal unworthiness; and hence this sense of unworthiness is an evidence of growth in grace.

4. *Tenderness of conscience.* Many professed Christians, I am sorry to say, do not exemplify this tenderness of conscience. They do and say many things from which the sensibilities of a tender conscience would revolt. And why? Because they are not Christians? I do not so say. But because they are not growing in grace. Those who grow in grace, having tender consciences, are afraid of sin. They do not lay claim to perfection. They sometimes, yea, they often sin. Conscience condemns them in proportion to its tenderness, and they feel the deepest grief on account of their deviation from the path of rectitude. Tenderness of conscience is an invaluable possession and indicates growth in grace.

5. *A disposition to forgive injuries and do good to enemies.* These are duties which to the lukewarm professor are very difficult of performance. They come directly into contact with the impulses of human nature. It is natural to retaliate injuries and to do evil to those that hate us. When Divine grace enables us so to subdue the propensities of our nature as cheerfully to forgive those who trespass against us, and do good to those that hate us, we may know that we are growing in grace. We are becoming more like God who delights in the exercise of forgiving mercy, and makes his enemies the recipients of ten thousand blessings.

6. *An increasing love of communion with God in secret prayer.* We take delight in holding intercourse with those we love. The throne of

grace is one of the places at which God permits his people to enjoy spiritual interviews with himself. The guilty backslider is ashamed and afraid to draw near to God—the warm-hearted Christian comes into his presence with delight, and communes with him at the mercy-seat. Those who are growing in grace would not for all the wealth of the world be deprived of the privilege of secret prayer. Such deprivation they would consider a most grievous calamity. If their access to the throne of grace was cut off they would be wretched indeed. Reader, do you love to pray in secret?

7. *A cheerful readiness to do any thing to promote the cause and the glory of God.* It is a mortifying truth that Christians sometimes become indifferent to the interests of the cause of God. They can see Zion languish without any special sorrow—they can see her prosper without any special joy. They are at ease—in a state of guilty apathy. They are not zealous for the Divine glory. They can see God dishonored, and their hearts are not broken by the sight. They can see his glory tarnished, and their spirits are not stirred within them. I need not say that the doctrine of growth in grace is not illustrated in such Christians. Those who are advancing in the Divine life ardently love the cause of God, and desire above all things the promotion of his glory. The honor of God is dearer to them than all other objects. Hence they evince a cheerful readiness to do any thing they can do to promote the cause and the glory of God.

Verbal expressions of attachment to this cause do not satisfy them. They must *do* something, and *will do* something, to subserve its advancement. They do not think it sufficient to say in words that they desire the Divine glory; they prove their sincerity by acting with a view to its promotion. In short, those who are growing in grace regard religion not as a nominal thing, but as a reality of transcendent importance. They have in their souls the power of godliness and they are a peculiar people.

Reader, in view of these evidences of growth in grace, are *you* growing in grace? Is your path like that of the just, shining brighter and brighter? Are you forgetting the things that are behind—reaching to those before—and thus pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus? I pray you examine the matter. Be not satisfied with “a name that you live” while you are comparatively dead. Bow down before God, and ask him that you may grow in grace till the day comes when grace shall effloresce in glory.

## NO. X.

## REQUISITES TO CHRISTIAN USEFULNESS.

THE Saviour terms his disciples "the salt of the earth." We are all acquainted with the utility of salt. We apply it to various substances, and they are not only preserved from putrefaction, but rendered palatable. Its operation therefore is salutary. There is an analogy between the influence of salt, in the natural world, and the influence of Christians, in the moral world. The influence of salt is physical—the influence of Christians is moral. The efficacy of salt depends on its quality. When it loses its savor it is good for nothing. The usefulness of Christians arises from their moral qualities. The nearer these qualities approach perfection the more useful do their possessors become. Every Christian is under the strongest obligations to be as useful as possible. His usefulness should be commensurate with the possibilities of usefulness. He is deeply criminal if he becomes like salt which has lost its savor. As Christians should aim to be useful servants of God, my object at present is to point out some of the requisites to Christian usefulness.

1. *An intimate acquaintance with the word of*

*God.* Ignorance is not the matter of devotion. God is not accustomed to sanctify ignorance. The Bible is the store house of knowledge. It is the source whence we derive religious instruction. There we learn the will of God. How likely shall we be to act in opposition to that will if we do not know it! We shall be "carried about with divers and strange doctrines" unless we are well acquainted with the word of God. Intelligent piety is one of the first requisites to Christian usefulness. If this is true, we are at no loss in understanding why so many members of the churches are so inefficient. They do comparatively nothing. They are only partially acquainted with the holy Scriptures. Their piety, whatever other features it may possess, is not conjoined with intelligence. Ignorance is in the way of its successful operation. "That the soul be without knowledge is not good."

2. *Zeal for the glory of God.* This sacred emotion should animate every Christian heart. It should put all the machinery of the soul in motion. It must be zeal for the Divine glory. Zeal for any other object will contaminate our performances; for it will preclude purity of motive. This zeal must be ardent, so as to be undiminished by difficulties and obstacles. It must be untiring, so as to hold on its way, hoping against hope, for the accomplishment of its object. The Christian will never do much in the cause of God without zeal. He will faint and tire unless a sacred enthusiasm imparts its im-

pulsive influences. These influences must be steady. The Christian who acts under them will probably be regarded by the world as beside himself. Auspicious to the interests of Zion will be the day when the world shall consider Christians *deranged* on account of their absorbing solicitude for the glory of God. The apostles and first Christians were looked upon by their enemies as bereft of reason. Zeal should be according to knowledge; and it will be according to knowledge if there is an intimate acquaintance with the word of God.

3. *Love to immortal souls.* How are Christians to be instrumental in the salvation of souls unless they labor to effect this object, and what but love to souls will elicit effort? This view of the matter suggests one of the causes of the uselessness of a great many professors of religion. They have nothing like an adequate love for immortal souls. Hence the general defectiveness of family religion. How many heads of families show a criminal indifference to the salvation of children and servants! They have no family altars. They have no morning and evening sacrifices! Why is this? Their family religion is defective because their love of souls is defective. And they can let their impenitent neighbors go unwarned into eternity. No Christian can make any rational calculation on usefulness, so far as the salvation of sinners is concerned, who does not fervently love their souls. Love to immortal souls is a most important element of Christian usefulness. Look at those minis-

ters whose preaching has been most successful in bringing sinners to the knowledge of the truth. Have they not been most distinguished for their love of souls? And so of private members of the churches. Christian, if you would be useful in "saving souls from death," cherish for them some of that love which brought the Saviour down from heaven; and often ponder the question: "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

4. *A willingness to do good in little things.* This is an essential requisite to usefulness. Some persons would overturn a mountain if they could, for it would attract attention; but they would not care to perform an act which would be unnoticed. They covet notoriety and laudation. Some church members give largely to objects of benevolence who never hand to a neighbor the unostentatious tract. Some parents appear very religious in the house of God; but they fail to exemplify the excellences of religion in the family circle. Some masters make eloquent missionary speeches in our annual convocations who would think it a great condescension to go into their "kitchens" and read to their servants the word of God. They are not willing to do good in little things. Let it be considered that very few persons can occupy prominent positions. Very few can do good on a conspicuous theatre. If the great mass of Christians would be useful, they must be willing to do good in little things. And they may even do more in this way than any other, as the dew of heaven in



the silence of its influence does infinitely more for the world than Niagara with its mighty thundrings.

5. *Uniformity and constant perseverance in our efforts to do good.* Some Christians do very well at times. They are periodically faithful. Their zeal for the glory of God and their love of souls are periodically excited. But they relax their efforts. There should be no relaxation. It is as much our duty to serve God at one time as another. We are required to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord." Men of the world do not understand *periodical* religion. When we exemplify it we lessen our influence over them. They see the propriety of Paul's declaration: "It is good *always* to be zealously affected in a good thing." A uniform constancy in our efforts to do good is requisite to Christian efficiency.

6. *The possession and the exercise of the spirit of prayer.* All effort is unavailing without the blessing of God. How is his blessing to be secured except by prayer? Useful Christians have ever been praying Christians. The apostles were men of prayer. All faithful ministers have been praying men. Prayer establishes an alliance between the weakness of the creature and the omnipotence of the Creator. "Prayer moves the hand that moves the world." Christian, if you would be useful pray much—pray and faint not—pray without ceasing. Prayer has accomplished wonders. "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

Labor as diligently to do good as if every thing depended on your own efforts; and then pray to God for success as earnestly as if you had done nothing. This is sound doctrine.

## NO. XI.

## THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

THE influence of example is proverbially great. Precepts unexemplified are of little value. History has been defined—"Philosophy teaching by example." The definition is very good. When history teaches us to practice the virtues of the good and avoid the vices of the bad, we cannot be too well acquainted with the annals of the past. The example of the wise and good ought to be copied. The best men, however, are imperfect. Their example is, therefore, imperfect. Hence it must not be too closely copied. But the example of Christ is perfect. It is the example of "God manifest in the flesh." Jesus became a man not merely to die, but to show men how to live—to exemplify the excellence of the Divine precepts.

In answer to the question, In what respects should we imitate Christ? the following thoughts are submitted:

1. *In his reverential regard for the will of God.*

He says, "I came down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me." "Lo I come (in the volume of the book it

is written of me) to do thy will, O God." "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." As Mediator he was in subjection to the Father. The Father's will was his rule of action. He became obedient, and his obedience was universal. At his baptism he said, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil *all* righteousness." He never said of any Divine command, This is a trivial matter—a non-essential. His reverential compliance with all the will of God was seen in his life and death. Christian, he has left you an example. Revere and obey the statutes of Jehovah.

2. *In the cultivation of a devotional spirit.*

As man it devolved on him to do this. We can imitate him only in what he did as man. How often we are told that he prayed. Frequently he withdrew from his disciples to pray. Sometimes he spent whole nights in prayer to God; and at other times he rose before the dawn of day and retired to a solitary place to hold uninterrupted communion with his Father. There were periods when he wished to be alone with God, and when the presence of even "the beloved disciple" would have been a disturbance. How ineffably sublime were his communings with his Father! How did such communings nerve him for the conflicts through which he passed! The cultivation of a devotional spirit had much to do in inspiring the invincible patience he displayed when, "oppressed and afflicted," he opened not his mouth.

Christians must ever imitate their Saviour in the cultivation of a devotional spirit. Their

happiness and usefulness depend materially on their so doing.

3. *In his zeal for the Divine glory.*

There was no object so dear to his heart as the glory of God. In him was illustriously fulfilled the declaration, "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up." He saw the temple desecrated, and his zeal for the honor of the God of the temple became intense, overwhelming, consuming. When, in view of the agony of the garden and tragedy of the cross, such trouble came upon him as had never been known on earth, he said, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." How impressive these words! The Redeemer, amid the sorrows which broke his heart, urged the petition, "Father, glorify thy name." As if he had said, Let the Divine glory be promoted through my sufferings and I will bear whatever may come upon me. His zeal was so great that the prospect of a most agonizing death could not extinguish it—nor could the damps of the sepulchre chill it.

Christians, in imitation of Christ, should be animated with a holy zeal for the Divine glory. The glory of God is the most important object in the universe. Christians are not at liberty to propose to themselves the accomplishment of any other object which comes in conflict with this. They should be inspired with zeal for the Divine glory till death—in death—and after death, even to eternity.

4. *In his resistance of the temptations of Satan.*

At his baptism the Saviour heard the approving voice of the Father—the Spirit descended like a dove and abode upon him—but immediately after, he was led into the wilderness and there tempted of the Devil. How violently was he assailed! Temptations were presented in every form Satanic ingenuity could devise. He was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. That is, he resisted. Tried severely, he resisted firmly. He said to his adversary, “It is written,” &c., and triumphed over him—a fact which shows how important it is to have the mind well stored with the word of God. Christians must never forget that Christ in resisting the temptations of Satan left them an example that they should follow his steps. “Resist the devil,” is a Divine command which must be obeyed. The example of Christ should prompt all his disciples to obey it.

5. *In his superiority to the world.*

What cared the Saviour for earthly honors and riches? He considered them worthless as dross. He might have encircled his brow with a brighter crown than ever monarch wore. He might have exerted a silent influence on the nations which would have caused them to pour the wealth of the world at his feet. But the realities of the invisible state occupied his attention. He lived far above the contamination of the world. He breathed the atmosphere and imbibed the spirit of heaven. “The signs of the

times" indicate that it is at present peculiarly incumbent on Christians to be like Christ in his superiority to the world.

Ah, how much worldliness there is in the churches of the saints! This worldly spirit is placing gigantic obstacles in the way of the progress of the cause of God. Christians remember your Saviour's example.

6. *In his love to the souls of men.*

Love brought him down from heaven. "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Love led him to the cross and presided over the crucifixion scene. When Christians are like Christ they love the souls of men, and when they copy his example they do whatever they can to promote the salvation of souls. O that more of the love displayed on Calvary could be infused into the hearts of Christians!

7. *In his meekness under injurious treatment.*

"When he was reviled he reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not." "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter." How uncomplaining! Meek as a lamb! He had power to retaliate every injury by sending its perpetrator to hell. But he would not—he did not. Christian, copy the example of your Saviour in his meekness under injurious treatment.

8. *In the indulgence of a forgiving spirit.*

While his enemies were nailing him to the cross he said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." What God-like magnanimity! Whose admiration is not excited? Stephen the

first Christian martyr imbibed the spirit, and copied the example of his dying Lord. When his enemies were stoning him to death he said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Did he not display a noble spirit?

Remember, Christians, that in these, as well as in other respects, Jesus has left you "an example that you should follow his steps."



## NO. XII.

## CHRISTIAN LOVE.

CHRISTIANS are a peculiar people, distinguished in many respects from all other people. One thing about them as distinctive as any other, is their love for one another. Jesus gave his disciples a new commandment, that they should love one another. It was new because love was to distinguish his followers, and invest his religion with an attractive peculiarity: "By this," said he, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another." Love was to be the badge of discipleship.

The nature of Christian love should be considered.

It is not a love based on natural relationships. Parents and children, brothers and sisters love one another. The love arises from the natural relation they sustain. This has nothing to do with Christian love. The latter is altogether different. Nor is Christian love based on the similarity of the tastes and habits of those who move in the same circle in society. Such persons necessarily contract partialities for one another. But in these partialities the element of Christian love may be totally absent.

Nor is Christian love based on sectarian preferences. The most wicked men may have denominational preferences. And they sometimes exemplify the strongest partialities and prejudices.

Christian love has for its basis the fact that those toward whom it is exercised are Christ's—belong to Christ. “Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, *because ye belong to Christ*, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.” Christian love grows out of the fact that its objects are Christ's disciples. It, therefore, always implies previous love to Christ. It cannot exist without love to the Saviour. This is the reason why it proves so conclusively that its possessor has “passed from death to life.” Christian love recognizes another fact—that its objects bear the moral image of Christ. All Christians love the image of their Saviour. Wherever they see his likeness they admire it. The more striking the likeness the more intense the admiration. Hence Christians love those most who are most like Christ. In some the lineaments of the Redeemer's image are so faint that scarcely any love is excited. How many who call themselves Christians hardly deserve to be loved at all.

I will mention some of the *hindrances to Christian love*. A general hinderance is the imperfection that cleaves to all Christians. They are not angels. They are fallen human beings whom Divine grace is fitting for heaven. But to be more specific :

*Too little religious intercourse* is a hinderance to Christian love. I do not mean that Christians do not often see one another, but they do not talk as much on religious subjects as they ought to do. In ancient times "those who feared the Lord spoke often to one another and the Lord hearkened and heard it." Conversation on experimental religion excites Christian love in a wonderful manner. The hearts of those engaged in fraternal colloquy often burn within them.

*Evil speaking* is a hinderance to Christian love. By evil speaking I mean not only that which is false, but that which, if true, is injurious to those spoken of—that is to say, unless good can be accomplished by speaking, which will more than counterbalance the injury the person spoken of might suffer. Suppose a brother is spoken of disrespectfully and disparagingly by his brethren, it at once cools his love toward them. This will be the case as long as human nature is what it is. The imprudent and sinful use of the tongue is prominent among the hinderances to Christian love. The tongue is a small member, and is the instrument of much mischief. What Christian's tongue has not spoken improper words, and those words have weakened the cement of Christian love. They have done a spiritual injury to the person speaking, and the person spoken of.

*A suspicious disposition* is also a hinderance to Christian love. I pity those who possess it. Such persons are always expecting something bad. They imagine a thousand evil things.

They think they see unfavorable indications in the manner of their brethren, when nothing unfavorable is intended. Those who are disposed to be suspicious will suffer their suspicions to impair, in a great degree, their Christian love. It sometimes happens that positive alienations have their origin in gratuitous suspicion.

*Pride* is an obstacle to the exercise of Christian love. It operates in many ways. Sometimes a brother does wrong and is too proud to confess it. The wrong done weakens Christian love, nor can it be strengthened without confession. Sometimes pride makes the offended brother require too much of the offender. No Christian should be expected to degrade himself in giving satisfaction to an offended fellow-Christian. Christianity promotes humility, not degradation.

*Want of faithfulness in administering reproof to those that need it* is a hinderance to Christian love. "Let the righteous smite me," said David, "and it shall be as an excellent oil that shall not break my head." Our best friends are those who tell us of our faults with the view of correcting them. Reproof administered and received in a proper spirit promotes Christian love. There is, however, a great deal of unfaithfulness among Christians. How many practically prefer speaking of the faults of brethren to others—even to men of the world! This course paralyzes the strength of Christian affection. It is vastly injurious.

Some of the effects of Christian love deserve

notice. It produces *union, harmony, and co-operation* among brethren. It is the bond of union. Truth is the basis, and love the bond of union. It is the sacred cement that binds redeemed souls together. Where there is love there is union—there is harmony—there is co-operation. In the absence of love none of these things are to be found.

Christian love produces *a spirit of forgiveness among brethren*. We can easily forgive those we love. Love makes that easy, which, in its absence, is difficult, and even impossible. How promptly are church difficulties adjusted when brethren love one another!

Christian love *adds greatly to the moral power of a Church*. It is one of the most important and vital elements of moral power. All is weakness where there is no love. Talents, learning, worldly respectability—all these are nothing without it.

Christian love has *a most favorable influence on the world*. "By this," said Jesus, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one for another." The ardent love of primitive Christians for one another made an impression on their enemies. Their persecutors saw among them an attachment equally mysterious and undeniable.

I have suggested many thoughts on which I cannot enlarge. I leave it to the Christian reader to trace them in their important ramifications.

## NO. XIII.

## CHRISTIAN HUMILITY.

HUMILITY is one of the loveliest ornaments of the Christian character. No grace of the Holy Spirit is spoken of by the sacred writers in terms of higher commendation. A meek and quiet spirit is said to be in the sight of God of great price. And the Saviour said more than once: "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Humility is a Christian virtue which has been often counterfeited. What grace has not been? It should be remembered that this counterfeiting process is a testimony to the existence of the genuine virtues that are counterfeited—as counterfeit money indicates the existence of pure coin. The very fact that there is a feigned humility makes it necessary to define the genuine humility enjoined in the Scriptures.

In what does this genuine humility consist? I answer it consists in a thorough consciousness of our sinfulness and consequent unworthiness—such a consciousness as leads to profound self-abasement before God. It does not consist in an undervaluation of our talents; nor does it necessarily lead us to speak disparagingly of our men-

tal or moral acquisitions. This is too frequently nothing more nor less than affectation. Paul said to the Romans: "For I say to every man that is among you not to think of himself *more highly* than he ought to think." This implies that it is right for every man to think of himself as highly as the facts pertaining to him authorizes him to think. Persons who possess true humility *may* undervalue themselves; but surely genuine humility does not make a man who has ten talents believe that he has only five, nor does it make the man of five talents believe he has but one. This would be adopting an opinion inconsistent with truth. But humility and truth go together. Indeed humility involves a true view of things. This is no doubt the reason why it elicits so largely the Divine approbation. The view the humble man has of himself corresponds to the facts in the case. He *is* polluted by sin—he feels it—he knows it. He *is* unworthy—he admits and deplores it. Thus it is that between lowliness of mind and our true character there is a striking coincidence. It pleases God when we form correct conceptions of ourselves. Christian humility is referred to by the Saviour when he says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." To be poor in spirit is be humble—it is to feel our nothingness—it is to be conscious of our necessitous spiritual circumstances—it is to be abased before the Infinite One.

I refer to some of the advantages of humility :

1. *It promotes a profitable study of the word of God.* The proud are apt to determine in

their own imaginary self-sufficiency what doctrines the Bible ought to teach; and then they read it, fully resolved to find something to sustain those doctrines. Every one must see how disadvantageous it is to read the word of God in this way. Humility causes us to repair to the inspired volume as to the fountain of truth. It makes us willing to be taught of God. It prompts the adoption of Samuel's language: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." It inspires a docile spirit without which the Bible can never be studied to advantage.

2. *It inspires a cordial admiration of the gospel plan of salvation.* This plan originated in grace, and every part of it developes the grace of God. Now humility implies that we consider ourselves culpable, guilty, unworthy creatures, our sins that render us so originating in ourselves. It recognizes another fact, that every thing good in us is the result of extraneous influence. Every plant of good quality that flourishes in the soil of the heart is an exotic, not indigenous. God has put it there. Salvation by grace is the only salvation suited to the condition of sinners. But the doctrine of salvation by grace is to the proud heart most unpalatable and repulsive. There is no admiration of the gospel plan of redemption where pride sits enthroned in the heart. Humility alone inspires an admiration of that plan.

3. *It secures the communication of Divine grace to the soul.* God resists the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. We need grace at every



step in the journey of life. We need it in prosperity to prevent too great elation, and in adversity to prevent unreasonable depression. We need it in health to inspire gratitude—in sickness to prevent repining. We need it in life to sustain us—in death to cheer us. God's grace alone is sufficient for us. This grace he is pleased to give to the humble. How advantageous is humility, securing, as it does, the communication of Divine grace to the soul!

4. *It qualifies for usefulness in the church.* The Head and Founder of the church was meek and lowly in heart. Surely then the members of the church should be like him. They will act with propriety toward one another when they are humble. Without humility in a church the objects of its organization cannot be carried into effect. Who are the most useful Christians? Those who are most humble. And then how easy to settle church difficulties when church members are clothed with humility!

5. *It produces patience under the afflictions of life.* When we have the sense of unworthiness which humility inspires we feel that we richly deserve our afflictions. The language of the humble is: "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." Hence they do not murmur under trials, but bow with uncomplaining submission to the will of God.

Do any inquire the best means of attaining Christian humility? I suggest the following thoughts:

1. *Frequent contemplation of the example of*

*Christ.* He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation—took upon him the form of a servant—humbled himself—and became obedient to the death of the cross. What condescension! What humiliation! When we think of Him who though rich for our sakes became poor, it is well adapted to humble our souls within us.

2. *A consideration of our sins and their demerit.* How numerous and how infinitely odious are our sins! Sin is the most hateful thing in the universe. God abhors it with an infinite intensity of aversion. Sin is the only thing that has disturbed the happiness of the Divine dominions. Sin is the highest insult that can be offered to the majesty of heaven. How deep should be our humility in view of the fact that our sins are many, and that they justly deserve the wrath of God.

3. *A reflection on what we were before conversion, and what we are destined to be.* Once enemies of the cross—now heirs apparent to thrones of glory; once on the way to hell—now hastening upwards to heaven; once far from God—now brought near by the blood of Christ, and destined to be nearer still.

## NO. XIV.

## CHRISTIAN JOY.

It has been often urged as an objection to Christianity that it lays an embargo on enjoyment during the present life. How many look on religion as a gloomy repulsive thing! How many consider its advantages altogether future, and that Christians are sacrificing their happiness in this world that they may enjoy eternal felicity in the world to come! These views are exceedingly erroneous. Christianity is not a foe to enjoyment. The religion of Christ, while it disallows thoughtless merriment and noisy mirth, inspires the soul with sacred joy—imparts to the mind a tranquility allied to that of saints in heaven. Why should not the Christian rejoice? Is he not a child of God? Do not all things work together for his good? Is he not an heir of glory? Are not the mansions of bliss to be his eternal abode? Is he not to dwell for ever at God's right hand? Are not these things so? And if they are, do they not authorize devout joy—sacred exultation?

Christian joy is an important element of Christian usefulness. In its absence it is very difficult to recommend religion to the favorable

consideration of the impenitent. It would be well for the people of God to think of this. For whatever increases their usefulness deserves their attention. Christian joy is a Christian duty. "Rejoice evermore"—"rejoice in the Lord," are Divine commands. They ought to be obeyed. They are not gratuitous injunctions. There is a propriety in them. Christians ought to rejoice for many reasons, a few of which I will mention.

1. *Sublime joy should arise from the relation they sustain to the three persons in the Godhead.*

They are the children of the Infinite Father. Having been born of God they are filially related to him. They are the sons of God, and on this account "God has sent forth the spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father." The spirit of adoption prompts them to claim the relationship of children. The Christian can look up to throne and say, "My Father!" and the Father looks down from the throne and says, "My child!" O ye saints! is there not joy in the thought that the Being who manages the universe is your Father, your best friend? Does not the sublimest satisfaction arise from a consciousness of this fact?

Christians are united to Christ. The union is a glorious one and productive of unspeakable blessings. Christ is "made to them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." He is their Elder Brother. Their relation to him is fraternal. It is so intimate a relation that Christ considers what is done to

them as done to himself. "Why persecutest thou *me*?" was the question that pierced the inmost soul of Saul of Tarsus. Jesus is not ashamed to call his disciples "*brethren*." From fraternal union with Christ flow the rich blessings of the "new covenant;" for of this covenant he is mediator. These blessings were bought with blood. They are precious. Those who are permitted to claim them as their own may well rejoice evermore.

Christians are the temples of the Holy Ghost. He dwells in them as their Comforter and Sanctifier. He is the *Guest* of the individual believer and of all the churches of Christ. Christians have much to do with the Spirit. They become Christians by being "born of the Spirit"—they "live in the Spirit"—"walk in the Spirit"—are "filled with the Spirit"—"pray in the Holy Ghost," &c. The love of God is said to be shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. The Spirit is the gracious occupant of the Christian's heart, carrying on there a work which contemplates perfect conformity to Christ. Is there not joy arising from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit? joy unspeakable and full of glory?

2. *Christians ought to rejoice in the assurance that all things work together for their good.*

Who gives them this assurance? Does it come from men whose promises often create hopes destined to speedy disappointment? Is it given by angels whose power, unequal to their benevolence, cannot make it good? No: it is the assurance of Him who cannot lie, and whose

power is adequate to the performance of whatever he has promised. All things work together for good. *All things!* A phrase delightfully universal in its import. It includes prosperity with all its retinue of blessings. It embraces adversity with all its train of evils. These evils, however, are apparent rather than real; for the sanctifying grace of God has only to touch them and they instantly become blessings. By a process known to spiritual chemistry, good is elicited from evil, and sweet is extracted from bitter. There is, therefore, nothing really injurious in the fury of the storm—nothing pernicious in the howlings of the tempest. These are among the “all things” that work together for good. Let this fact make its impression on the Christian’s heart, and he must rejoice, yea, will rejoice. How can the risings of joy in the soul be suppressed? How can feelings of gladness be extinguished? What considerations can create sorrow? Whence can come clouds of gloom to obscure the brightness of the moral sky? God is the author of the joy, and who can destroy it? Its source is in the infinite depths of the Divine nature, and cannot be affected by circumstances. Its indulgence is justified by the promise and oath of the Eternal. It is a joy which the approach of death increases rather than diminishes; for death introduces the Christian into “fulness of joy” of which present joy is only a foretaste. And this leads me to say:

3. *That the prospect of heaven should fill the saints with joy.*

What a prospect is this! How bright! How glorious! How sweetly it cheers the soul! How it animates the heart! How it enraptures the Spirit! Jesus says: "Where I am there shall my servant be." This is enough. To be with Christ will fully gratify all the desires of the redeemed soul. It is said of the glorified that "they shall see his face." What a sight! None like it in the wide universe. One view of the Lamb in the midst of the throne is worth more than kingdoms and empires. Christians! heaven is before you. Its bliss awaits you. Its palms are almost ready for your hands—its crowns for your heads—and its songs for your lips. "Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven." The prospect before you should inspire you with joy. It is your duty to be happy. You ought to be joyful. But you will not be—you cannot be—unless you cultivate deep spirituality of mind and ardent devotion of soul. Do this and your peace will flow like a "river"—your joy will abound—for God himself will be your "exceeding joy." In the language of an apostle you will "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and you will find that the "joy of the Lord is your strength." Then will you recommend Christianity to impenitent sinners; for they will see that it renders you happy. They will desire to share its blessings that they may have joys which they have never found in the unsatisfying pleasures of this vain world.

## NO. XV.

## THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE.

OF all the various species of animals that inhabit the earth man is peculiar in the possession of rational powers, and equally peculiar in the enjoyment of the faculty of speech. This faculty has, doubtless, been conferred for wise and beneficent purposes, but these purposes are often thwarted. The tongue is the prominent organ of speech, and it is needless to say that there is no member of the body more ungovernable. How many there are who though they may keep their feet from the pathway of transgression, and resolutely refuse to put forth their hands to iniquity, have but little control over their tongues. They say what they ought not, and "pierce themselves through with many sorrows."

To acquire the habit of governing the tongue is so difficult that he who has made the acquisition is pronounced by an apostle, "a perfect man." We may expect completeness of Christian character in him who can "keep his tongue as with a bridle."

Some one will perhaps inquire, what is implied in the government of the tongue? I an-



swer, it is not meant that the tongue shall not be used at all, but that it shall be properly used. But to be more specific :

1. *A properly governed tongue is controlled by an enlightened judgment and conscience.*

Feeling and passion may prompt the tongue to say what ought not to be said. This is often the case. Hence the cursing and swearing we so frequently hear. Hence the falsehoods so often uttered. Hence the indiscreet and wicked expressions elicited by anger. In these cases feeling and passion monopolize the tongue and make it their instrument, desecrating it to the most unworthy purposes. Judgment and conscience stand in the rear. If they utter their voice it cannot be heard amid the clamor of passion. Can a well-informed judgment and an enlightened conscience approve the uses, or rather abuses of the tongue to which I have referred? Never! Were they allowed to do so they would put forth their voice in such tones as would agitate the soul like a moral earthquake. The tongue is never properly governed unless a sound judgment and an enlightened conscience control it. It must not say what the judgment pronounces wrong—it must not utter what the conscience condemns. It must be silent unless it can secure the endorsement of judgment and conscience.

2. *A properly governed tongue is controlled by a will conformed to the will of God.*

The will has a mysterious power over the body. It is the doctrine of philosophy, that no

bodily movement takes place without a previous exercise of the will. If this be so the tongue is under the influence of the will; and if the will is opposed to God, the tongue will inevitably say what it should not say. Hence the will must be conformed to the will of God. Then it will properly regulate the tongue. It will cause the tongue to speak of Divine things.

3. *A properly governed tongue is controlled by sanctified affections.*

The affections of the heart being unchanged, it may be expected that corrupt communications will proceed out of the mouth; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The tongue will spread an injurious influence all around so long as depravity controls the affections. Hence the necessity of a change of heart is manifest, for without it the affections will never take hold of worthy objects. When the regenerating process detaches the affections from things sinful, and places them on things Divine, the tongue feels the influence of the change; for as soon as regeneration imparts its sanctifying impulses to the affections, the affections bring the tongue under suitable control. They cause it to speak forth the praise of God. Divine subjects are dwelt upon with delight; for the renewed heart governs the tongue.

Having attempted to show what is implied in the government of the tongue, I may now refer to the necessity of its government. Why is it necessary?

1. *The faculty of speech is a noble endowment.*—It is, as I have said, peculiar to man. As man is thus distinguished from other animals he should properly employ his tongue, which is called his “glory.” The prominent instrument in making articulate sounds, ought to be used for valuable purposes. But it will never be used for such purposes unless it is properly governed. Hence arises the necessity of its government.

2. *The evils resulting from an ungoverned tongue show how important it is to control it.*—The name of these evils is legion. How often does the tongue of one man (not to say woman) disturb the peace of a neighborhood! How often do slander suits grow out of the faculty of speech! How much the tongue has to do in the creation of Church difficulties! A large majority of these difficulties occur because so many church-members fail to govern their tongues. Alas! what an amount of evil-speaking necessarily proceeds from an ungoverned tongue.

3. *The government of the tongue is honorable to the Christian profession.*—The Divine word says, “Keep thy tongue from evil.” “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying.” Aye more, it is said, “If any man seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man’s religion is vain.” An ungoverned tongue is a reproach to the Christian name; but a properly regulated tongue is an honor to a religious profession.

4. *The government of the tongue contributes greatly to usefulness.*—How much good Christians might do if they would only use their tongues aright. Anciently those “who feared the Lord spake often one to another.” Christians should consecrate their colloquial powers. They ought to consider “Holiness to the Lord,” written on their tongues. They should exhort one another daily. And how useful they might be in talking to impenitent sinners about their souls! How fluent they often are in talking of worldly things—how culpably silent in reference to things Divine! And how they should tremble when they remember who said, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

5. *We must at the Judgment, give an account to God of all we say.*—The Judge himself has said, “For every idle word that men speak they shall give an account at the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned.” How solemn the thought that what we now say we must account for before the supreme tribunal! Were we suitably impressed with this thought we would see the necessity of the government of the tongue. Results glorious or awful will follow our words.

Those who wish to acquire the government of their tongues ought to resolve:

1. To think before they speak.
2. To avoid unprofitable associations.

3. To speak unfavorably of no one unless duty requires it.

4. To keep their hearts right with God.

Christians, will you observe these rules? If you do you will neither regret it in death nor at the judgment.

## NO. XVI.

## SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD.

THE spirit of Christianity and the spirit of the world are so unlike that it is perfect folly to attempt to reconcile them. They are as opposite as light and darkness—as contrary as truth and error. Many efforts have been made by nominal Christians to form an alliance between these spirits, but every effort has failed, and must ever fail, while holiness and sin are hostile to each other. Hence Jesus said, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” John, James, and Paul, under the impulse of inspiration wrote: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. The friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whosoever therefore will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God. Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God.

I shall aim to show that Christians should live separate from the world. This is prac-

licable. Jesus said of his disciples, "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil." Again he said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." It is possible, therefore, to be in the world and not of the world—kept from its evil. This is what professors of Christianity need at the present time—preservation from the evil of the world. The fact that they are not of the world urgently needs illustration. Religion is almost everywhere suffering for want of this illustration. But why should Christians be separate from the world? I answer:

1. *Because the world is opposed to God.*—Nothing is more evident than that those who are under the influence of the spirit of the world are enemies of God. Men of the world have carnal minds, and the carnal mind is enmity against God. The Scriptures inform us that "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life" are of the world. How comprehensive are these phrases! They are full of meaning. Those who are under the influence of the forms of evil denoted by these expressions are of the world. They are not on the Lord's side. Now, if the world is opposed to God, Christians should be separate from it. How can they otherwise show their friendship for God? It cannot be done. Love to God, and love to his cause must be indicated by a separation from the world—by a repudiation of its spirit—by a non-conformity to its practices.

2. *That an important object contemplated in*

*the death of Christ may be accomplished.*—And what is that object? It is specified where Paul says of Jesus, “who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” A peculiar people. The ancient Jews were called God’s peculiar people. They were so nationally. Christians are a peculiar people, but not nationally. They are peculiar as individuals and as churches. But what does peculiar mean? It signifies something special in contrast with that which is common. A man who differs from other men is peculiar. Some trees and flowers are peculiar to certain climes. Some animals are peculiar to certain regions of the earth. Now Christians are required to be a peculiar people—that is unlike other people. There is to be something characteristic about them. If this is true they must come out from the world and be separate; for until they are separate they cannot be peculiar. Christians must practically remember the object Jesus died to accomplish—their redemption from iniquity—their purification unto himself, &c. This object was dear to him—so dear that he could not be deterred by the shame and the agony of the cross from an energetic pursuit of it. He gave himself—to poverty, persecution, sorrow, suffering, death, that he might make for himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Do you not desire, Christian, that the purpose your Saviour had in



view when he expired on Calvary may be effected in you? Then you must be separate from the world. It may be that some one who knows the desolation of widowhood will read what I am now writing. And possibly that bereaved one will think of some object which her loved one in life and in death had his heart anxiously fixed on. She has thought and said, O how often! that object shall be carried into effect if it is numbered among human possibilities. Her love for the departed one inspires this firm resolve. Christians, think of your Redeemer, your Husband, who to make you his bride shed his blood that he might cleanse you from moral defilement and purify you unto himself. Shall not the object he had in view when he came down from heaven—when he lay a babe in the manger—when he agonized in the garden—an object he did not lose sight of when the heavens grew dark at his death—be accomplished in you? Shall not Jesus in looking on you say, with triumphant satisfaction, “the object I had in view when I died is effected in them.” If you would afford your Saviour this satisfaction, see to it that you are separate from the world. Be not conformed to this world.

3. *That one of the important purposes of Church organization may be carried out.*—One of the plainest truths of the Bible is that the kingdom of Christ is spiritual. Unlike secular kingdoms it partakes not of the spirit

of the world. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." Now, it is evident that an important purpose of Church organization is to embody the people of God—to distinguish them from others? To be incorporated into one body they must be separate from the world. And after they are thus incorporated into the Church, they must remain distinguished from the world by being separate from it. That the Church organization is designed to be a holy organization is manifest because Church members are commanded to withdraw from every brother that walks disorderly. Jesus Christ in granting to his churches the power of discipline teaches how important it is for every Christian body to be pure. No Christian body, however, can be unless it is separate from the world.

4. *That a salutary influence may be exerted on the world.*—If Christians do not live separate from sinners they can have no religious influence over them. If professors of religion, instead of being separate from the world, enter into the spirit of the world, then the world will have more influence over them than they will have over the world. Suppose a professed Christian is guilty of fraud—speaks falsely—desecrates the Lord's day—drinks ardent spirits—indulges a revengeful temper—becomes light and frivolous—is guilty of evil-speaking—foolishly extravagant and vain in dress—let a professed Christian do any of

these things, and what influence can he exert over the world? Would sinners in their dying moments call on such a professor to pray for them? No, no. Christian influence depends greatly on separation from the world.

## NO. XVII.

## GOD'S PEOPLE ARE HIS WITNESSES.

GOD in permitting his people to remain on earth must have in view some important object. They are prepared for heaven and would be unspeakably happy if translated to the world of glory. It is far better to depart and be with Christ. Why then is it included in the arrangements of the Divine economy that Christians shall for a time sojourn on earth? Intending to answer this question only in part, I say that the people of God remain temporarily in this world that they may be his *witnesses*. They have a testimony to bear in favor of his cause. Their work on earth will not be done till they bear this testimony. God said to his ancient people, "Ye are my witnesses," and Jesus said to the apostles, "Ye are witnesses of these things." What an honor to be a witness for God! What a privilege to bear testimony for Christ! The goodness of a cause is established by what can in truth be said in its favor. There is no danger of exaggeration in what God's people may say in commendation of his cause.

But what should Christians testify? They should testify among other things—

1. That God is worthy of supreme love and adoration.

2. That happiness can be found in him alone.

3. That Jesus Christ is the only Saviour from sin.

4. That the saved are new creatures in Christ Jesus.

5. That the principles of Christianity are not only efficacious to renovate the heart, but to regulate the life.

6. That the soul is worth infinitely more than the body.

7. That the things of this world are comparatively worthless while eternal things are of infinite moment.

Christians must testify these things by word and action. They must combine their verbal and practical testimony. They must say that God is worthy of supreme love. Thus they will bear verbal testimony against all forms of idolatry, and by loving him themselves they must bear practical testimony to his worthiness of their supreme affection. They must furnish a practical endorsement of the declaration that he deserves their love. So of seeking happiness in him. They must show by seeking their happiness in him that they believe him to be the source of happiness—the fountain of living waters. Should they leave this fountain and hew for themselves broken cisterns holding no water, what would their verbal testimony be worth? Their practical testimony would contradict and

nullify it. For practical testimony is much more effective than verbal.

In exemplifying the doctrine of salvation from sin, Christians testify to all that Jesus has done. I here avail myself of Paul's ingenious and triumphant logic. If we are saved from our sins, our faith is not vain—if our faith is not vain, our preaching is not vain—if our preaching is not vain, Christ rose from the dead—if he rose, he was buried—if he was buried, he died—if he died he became incarnate—if he became incarnate he came into the world to save sinners. Thus our being saved from sin proves the resurrection and, by consequence, the death of Christ. The virtue that saves proceeds from his death, and his resurrection is a triumphant recognition of that virtue. How important for Christians to testify that Jesus is the only Saviour, and show that they have been saved by him! Christians in testifying that the saved are new creatures in Christ, only reiterate what inspiration has declared. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things have passed away, behold all things are become new." To be born again is a great spiritual change. Every such change testifies to the power and grace of God. Every such change proves the gospel true. It is, therefore, all-important that the new creation be seen—that the proof of it be exhibited. It must be shown that the principles of Christianity are not only efficacious to renovate the heart, but to regulate the life. "The grace of God that brings salvation teaches us that, denying all ungodli-

ness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." This is a *practical* age. Men want something more than words. A change of heart is to the person experiencing it a matter of consciousness. But it cannot be a matter of consciousness to the world. How then is the world to be convinced that the change has occurred? It must be indicated by the tenor of the life. When this is done the efficacy of Christian principles is seen. Their power to regulate the life is exhibited.

Christians must not only say in word, but they must say practically that the soul is valuable, and that the things of eternity are all-important. They must manifest much more solicitude about their souls than their bodies—they must evince a much deeper interest in eternal than in temporal things. Christian parents must let the world see that they are much more concerned about the souls than the bodies of their children. Christian friends should display far more anxiety for the eternal, than for the temporal welfare of their unconverted friends. Alas, that things unseen and eternal exert no more influence! "This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation."

Christians, considering themselves witnesses for God, ought to be careful to bear a uniform and consistent testimony. All can see the importance of this. Suppose a witness in court tells one thing and then contradicts it. Suppose his statements clash and are utterly irreconcilable. We lose confidence. And this is the rea-

son why the world has no more confidence in many professors of religion. Their testimony is not uniform. There is no consistency in it. What did they say when they joined the church? That they were dead to sin and to the world. But how often do they act as if they were alive to sin and dependent on the world for enjoyment and happiness. In making a profession of religion they said they loved Jesus. But often since they have had not a word to say for him, and they have done very little for his cause. The world notices all this, and religion suffers because the testimony of its friends in its favor is strangely inconsistent and contradictory.

O Christians, will you not bear a true testimony? Jesus, your Master, is called "the true and faithful witness." Would you not be like him? Do you not tremble at the thought of being found false witnesses? Would you not be like him? You have it in your power greatly to injure or greatly to promote the cause of Christ. Yours is a responsible position. Realize its responsibility and act accordingly. Then will it be said to you: "Well done, good and faithful servants; enter into the joy of your Lord."



## NO. XVIII.

## THE PROPER USE OF MONEY.

THERE are many professors of religion who readily admit that they are the Lord's—that they have been bought with a price—but that their property belongs to God, and ought to be consecrated to his glory, they concede very reluctantly, even if the concession is made at all.

It is pertinent, therefore, in a series of articles on Christian Duty, to call attention to the proper use of money. I employ the term money, as representative of property, worldly possessions, &c.

The first proposition I lay down is, that *the money, the property of God's people, belongs to him*. To establish this proposition, it is only necessary to show that Christians, in soul and body, belong to the Lord. The language of inspiration is: "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Here the fact is clearly stated, that Christians do not belong to themselves. The reason of this fact is, that they are bought with a price. The price paid for them did not effect a partial, but an entire purchase. It bought them in their

compound nature as possessed of body and spirit. They, in their complete persons, belong to the Lord. If, therefore, they acquire property by the exercise of their bodily or mental powers, that property is the Lord's; for the body and mind are both his, and he is entitled to the products of the labor of both. The proper question, then, is, not how much they should give to the Lord's cause, but how much they are at liberty to appropriate to their own support. God sustains his servants while they serve him.

A second proposition I lay down is, that *the proper use of money is its employment in advancing the cause of God in the world*. And here it may be said, that an expenditure of money or its equivalent has always been necessary in maintaining the interests of religion in the world. It was so in patriarchal times. The sacrifices offered in that period of the world's history cost something. They were not supplied by miracle. The expenditure of money or its equivalent, under the Jewish economy, was greater than in the days of the patriarchs. It was, in some respects, an expensive economy, though it had reference to only one nation.

The interests of religion, under the gospel dispensation, are sustained by pecuniary benefactions. This dispensation is comprehensive as the world, and will continue until Christ's second advent. It contemplates the salvation of our lost race, and the world-wide extension of the kingdom of Christ. And how are these important objects to be accomplished? The gospel

must be preached to all nations; and must be preached by men, not by angels. Preachers are not miraculously fed and clothed. Their wants must be supplied. This cannot be done without money. Whose physical necessities can be met without money, or that which it represents?

The Bible, translated into the various languages spoken by men, and circulated among the nations of the world, must be the prominent instrument of advancing the cause of truth and righteousness. And how is the Bible to be translated and circulated? There must be pecuniary expenditures. The Bible never was translated, printed, and circulated without expense, and it never will be.

The prosperity and triumph of the cause of God in the world involves the accomplishment of whatever objects are good and great. To effect these objects there must be the use of money; and the proper use of money is its employment to accomplish the most important purposes. Such purposes are inseparable from the promotion of the cause of God. How, then, can money be so appropriately used as in advancing this cause? If the word of the Lord is "more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold," how can gold be so advantageously employed as in sending this word to the nations of the earth? In this way gold is made the means of conveying a treasure more valuable than gold.

Money is not worthily employed in securing worldly objects. And why? Because they are

insignificant and unimportant. What objects pertaining merely to this world are to be named in comparison with those objects whose accomplishment, while it affects the best interests of time, has its chief bearing on the concerns of eternity? The Saviour certainly teaches us that we may so use the "mammon of unrighteousness" as to promote our future welfare. We may so make our pecuniary contributions, that every one of them will be "laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life." Money is always unworthily used, when made the means of gratifying "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." Alas! how many use money for no other purpose!

No man uses money aright who does not make it the instrument of doing good in the world. To use it for purposes purely selfish is criminal; for no one is at liberty to make self the centre and circumference of the circle in which he moves. Such a man is like the desert sands, that receive and absorb the showers of heaven, but give back no fruits, no flowers, not a solitary shrub, in recognition of those showers.

"That man may last, but never lives,  
Who much receives, but nothing gives,  
Whom none can love, whom none can thank,  
Creation's blot, creation's blank."

A third proposition connected with this subject is, that *Christians should give to the cause of God, as he prospers them.* The apostolic rule is as follows: "Upon the first day of the week

let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him." This is the only equitable rule that could be established. We can only give as the Lord prospers us, and we ought to give to this extent. Then a small degree of prosperity will require a small contribution to the cause of God, while great prosperity will require a large contribution. The equity of this arrangement commends itself to every man's conscience.

The rule laid down by the apostle embraces every church member—"Let every one of you," &c.

It is greatly to be deplored that a few comparatively of our church members bear all pecuniary responsibilities. They are expected to give all that is given, while the great body of their brethren do nothing. *Every one* is to give—every brother, every sister—whether rich or poor. A church of poor members, by acting on this principle, will, in the course of a few years, give a large amount.

Finally, the apostle's rule requires a frequent recognition of the hand of God in our prosperity. "Upon the first day of the week," &c. A weekly acknowledgment of our dependence on God and our indebtedness to him would be most salutary in its influence.

## NO. XIX.

## THE ENDURANCE OF AFFLICTION.

WHILE Christians are in the enjoyment of health—able to engage actively in the service of God—it is their duty to glorify him by *doing his will*. But when the days of affliction come, and they are laid aside from the activities of life, it is no less their duty to glorify him by *suffering his will*. I, therefore, think it proper in this series of Numbers to call attention to *the endurance of affliction*.

I need not say to the people of God that affliction is a part of their earthly heritage. "In the world," says Jesus, "ye shall have tribulation." An apostle informs us that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Of the redeemed before the throne it is said, "These are they that came out of great tribulation;" and why should the saints on earth expect to go to heaven, and encounter no affliction on the way?

In the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, every Christian is thus addressed: "My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he

receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." Here we are taught to endure affliction with *humble submission to the will of God*. We are to be in subjection to the Father of spirits. Submission, unmurmuring submission becomes us. We must learn to say from the heart, "The will of the Lord be done." It is easy to say this when the heavens are bright above us—when the sun of prosperity shines radiantly upon us—when all is cheerful and joyous around us—but to say it when the heavens are dark and lowering—when the storms of adversity howl around our tabernacles—when we are on beds of languishing—when the Providences of God are full of mystery and gloom—then, truly, is it difficult to feed a reverential resignation to the Divine will. However, it is not impossible, and we must cherish the spirit of submission. We must go to Gethsemane and learn the lesson to be acquired there. Who can measure the depth of the Saviour's anguish when he said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death!" Who can conceive the bitterness of the cup of which

he said, with "strong crying and tears," let it "pass from me, if it be possible!" And yet he immediately added those words of submission—"not my will, but thine be done." Go, Christians, to the garden and see resignation to the Divine will perfectly exemplified. Learn there to suffer submissively and uncomplainingly.

In the verses already quoted from Hebrews, several considerations are presented, which show that Christians ought to endure affliction with patience and resignation.

1. *God is the author of their afflictions.*

"Despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." The chastening is of the Lord—it is he that rebukes. "Affliction comes not from the dust," nor does it come by chance. An infinitely wise God presides over the universe. This world is under his omnipotent control. Kingdoms rise and fall at his bidding. The hairs of his people's heads are all numbered. If this be so, can afflictions come upon them without his permission? Certainly not. The "chastening" of the Hebrews seems to have embraced the persecutions to which they were exposed—yet it was of the Lord. Joseph suffered affliction in Egypt—yet God sent him thither, and was, in one sense, the author of his affliction, though not in such a sense as to exculpate his wicked brothers or the wicked Egyptians from censure. Well, if God chastens his people they should endure it without a murmur. He is too wise to err. He never makes a mistake. All his proceedings are right. This



is the case even when "clouds and darkness surround him." There are in the infinitely perfect character of God ample reasons for the cordial resignation of his children to all he does. Remember, afflicted Christians, it is GOD who chastens you.

2. *Their afflictions are proofs of God's love.*

"Whom the Lord *loveth* he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Scourging is a severe process and God takes his children through it. It is a mystery to the world and to the nominal Christian, too, that God shows his love to his people by chastening them. And perhaps I ought to say that the real Christian, in moments of despondency, when oppressed with the burden of affliction, sometimes cries out: "If the Lord loves me, why does he deal thus with me?" John the Baptist, as it seems to me, became gloomy in prison and thought within himself, "If Jesus is, indeed, the Messiah why does he let me languish in this prison? Why does he not rescue me from the hand of Herod," &c.? And beginning to doubt he "sent two of his disciples," &c. It may be said that afflictions, abstractly considered, are not proofs of God's love. This may be, but the afflictions of Christians, contemplated in connection with their designed effect, are conclusive evidences of the love of God. He is training them for the skies—educating them for heaven—and he subjects them to a process of discipline of which *chastening* is an important part. The object he has in view shows his love to those he chastens as also does

the effect of the chastening. If afflictions are proofs of God's love to us we ought to prize them more highly than gold. They are blessings in disguise, and are worth infinitely more to the Christian than kingdoms and empires would be. How patiently, then, and even cheerfully should we endure affliction!

3. *God afflicts his people for their profit.*

He does not afflict willingly. He chastens with a paternal reluctance, and is, if I may so say, constrained to do so for the spiritual advantage of his children. He has in view their conformity to his moral image. He intends that they shall be holy, and chastens them that they may be partakers of his holiness—that is, that they may be holy as he is holy. Now, all affliction is, in one sense, the result of sin. An experience of affliction, therefore, impresses the people of God with the *evil of sin*; and whatever does this promotes their holiness. Affliction, then, is spiritually advantageous as a means of sanctification.

The chastening of the Lord also shows the vanity of all sublunary things, and, by consequence, the value and preciousness of heavenly things. Whatever weakens earthly attachments—severs the ties that bind to the world—and causes a higher appreciation of celestial glory—must be of spiritual benefit. In view of these considerations, Christians may well afford to bear submissively and even joyfully all the afflictions that come upon them. They ought,

like Paul, "to glory in tribulation;" for they have the assurance that their "light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

## NO. XX.

## THE PROSPECT OF DEATH AND HEAVEN.

CHRISTIANS are strangers and pilgrims on earth. Here they have no abiding place—no continuing city. This world is not their home. Their citizenship is in heaven, and their treasure is there also. To take possession of their inheritance above, the saints must pass through the gate of death. This gate stands between earth and heaven. Without passing through it none of the redeemed, with two exceptions, have entered the celestial mansions. Is death before the people of God? Is it inevitable? Is heaven beyond death? Then there are duties incumbent on Christians in prospect of death and heaven.

What are some of these duties?

1. *A calm reliance on Christ the conqueror of death.*

Faith in the Redeemer is indispensable to union with him. Its first exercise avails to the justification of the soul, and the justified live by faith on the Son of God. It is their duty and privilege to renew day by day their acts of faith, trusting at all times in the atoning blood through whose merits they first obtained peace

with God. Faith appreciates the mediatorial excellences of Christ and appropriates to its possessor the benefits of his mediation. It is through the Lord Jesus alone that believers are pardoned, reconciled, adopted, sanctified, and saved. It is through him they are supplied with the grace they need during their earthly pilgrimage; and on him they are dependent for support and consolation in death. The great enemy of the human race is death. This enemy is powerful and formidable. A contest with him would be hopeless on the part of man had not Jesus died. The sting of death is sin, and the Saviour died to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. A removal of sin in its guilt and pollution is the extraction of the sting of death. This is done through Christ, who is, therefore, the conqueror of death. What then is more manifestly the duty of Christians in prospect of death than a calm reliance on Christ? It will not do for them to confide in works of righteousness which they have done. Alas, all those works are polluted with iniquity and cannot be the ground of acceptance with a holy God. Christ alone meets the necessities, and answers the purposes of a dying hour. He alone enables his followers to meet death with composure and joy. Hence, in view of death they should calmly rely on him. All their contemplations of death should be connected with trust in Christ. They should feel that they are safe in his hands, and that death can do them no real injury.

2. *Christians ought, in prospect of death and*

*heaven, to engage more actively and zealously in the work of the Lord.*

They all have something to do. Jesus said just before his death: "Father, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." Christ as mediator had a work appointed him by the Father. All Christians have a work appointed them. And this work must be performed before they die and go to heaven. The interests of the cause of Christ are intrusted in a very important sense to his disciples. They are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Their agency is brought into requisition in the advancement of truth and righteousness. What soul is saved independently of Christian instrumentality? Doubtless Saul of Tarsus was converted in answer to the last prayer of the dying Stephen, and the probability is that all conversions that have occurred since, have taken place in answer to the prayers of Christians. So far as we know the people of God can do more while on earth to promote his cause than they will be able to accomplish in heaven. Doubtless they will be actively employed in heaven, but the sphere of action will be different. There will be no prayers offered in heaven for the salvation of sinners—there will be no personal effort for their conversion. There will be in heaven none of the poor and needy with wants to be supplied. There will be no pecuniary contributions to the cause of Christ. There are duties devolving on Christians now which cannot be performed in heaven. If performed at all, they must be done in this

life. And it must be remembered that there are obligations resting on every individual Christian. These obligations are untransferable. One Christian cannot perform the duty of another Christian. An angel cannot act in the room of a man. How much have Christians to do! and how little time in which to do it! Death and heaven are just before them. In view of this fact how actively should they be employed in the service of God! How zealously should they labor! How can they bear the thought that death should come and find them idle in the vineyard of their Master? Who would not rather go to heaven after a life of holy activity than after a life of inglorious ease? O Christian, see to it that when your Lord calls you away, he may call you from labor to rest, from exertion to repose, from prayers to praise, from tears to rapture, from conflict to victory.

3. *Christians should in prospect of death think much about heaven.*

To think much about heaven implies a great deal. It implies indifference to the things of the world, and a superiority to earthly objects. How insignificant appears every sublunary interest to the man whose treasure and heart are in heaven! The first Christians rejoiced much more in hope of the glory to be revealed than do modern ones. They "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they had a better and an enduring substance." But for their hope of glory they would have been the most miserable of men.

This world has few attractions for the people of God. There is really nothing worth living for apart from the interests of God's cause. But how superlative are the attractions of heaven! What a place it must be! The select locality of all the localities of unmeasured space. Heaven is the residence of God. There he displays his glory and fills with rapture all who behold it. There dwells Jesus the Lamb that was slain, the object of universal adoration and love. There are to be found the various orders of celestial beings, angels, cherubim, seraphim, principalities and powers. There the redeemed from the earth have found a home, and there they swell the rapture of salvation's immortal song. Free from sin and sorrow they are ever with the Lord. Their tears are all wiped away and the music of their hallelujahs God himself delights to hear.

O Christian, this heaven is before you. Its glories you shall see. Its songs you shall hear. Its joys you shall feel. A crown of righteousness is in reserve for you. A robe of spotless purity made white in the blood of the Lamb will ere long adorn you. Soon will you be able to say: "I am in heaven. After all my doubts and fears I have reached the city of God. The wandering exile has found a home. The pilgrim traveller has come to the end of his journey. The storm-tossed mariner has reached a peaceful shore. The scarred soldier has obtained the victory."

O Christian, think much of heaven and rejoice



in hope of the glory of God. Know for your comfort that when your "earthly tabernacle is dissolved, you have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." In closing these thoughts I invoke on all who have read them the love of the Father, the grace of the Lord Jesus, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

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